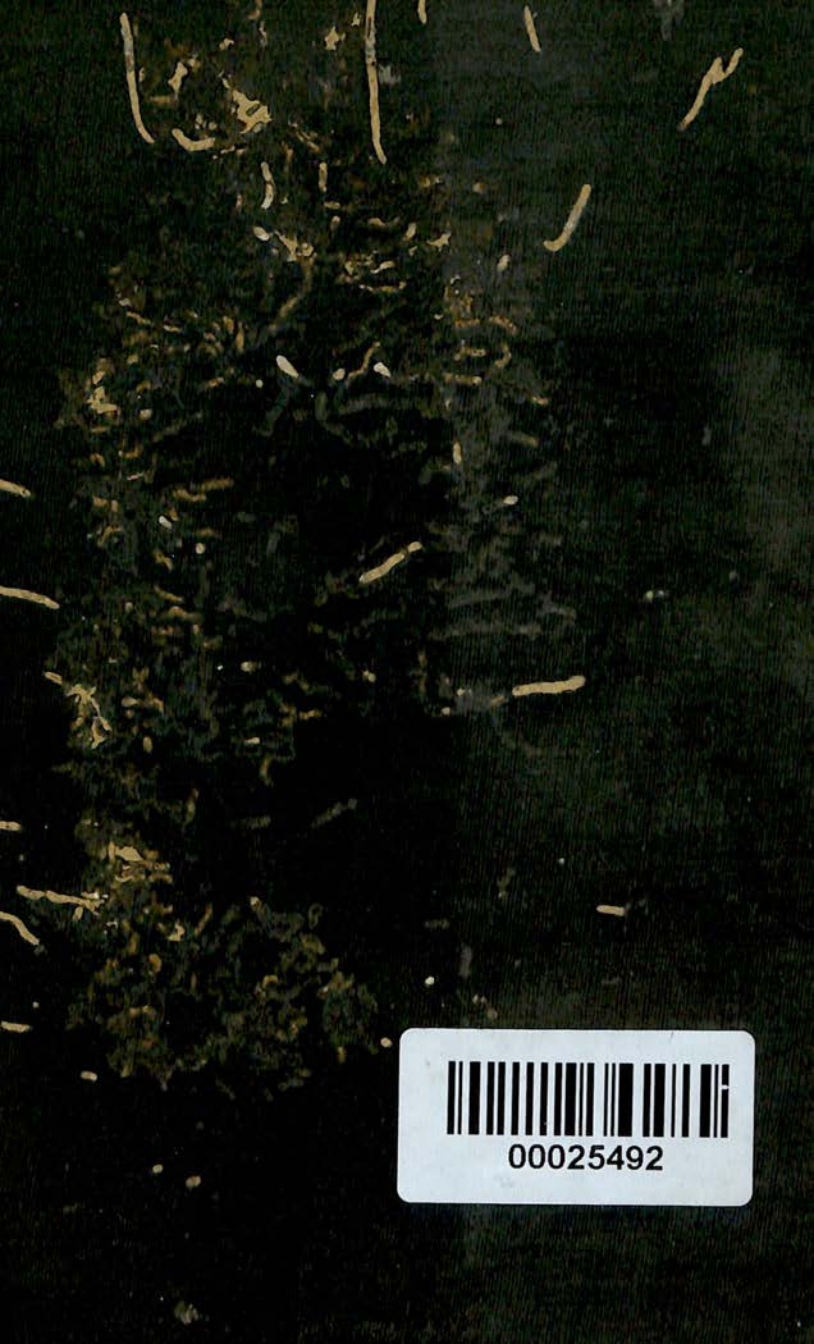
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LETTERS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

VOL. II.

LETTERS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

ADDRESSED TO

RICHARD HENGIST HORNE,

AUTHOR OF "ORION," "GREGORY VII.," "COSMO DE' MEDICI," ETC.

With Comments on Contemporaries.

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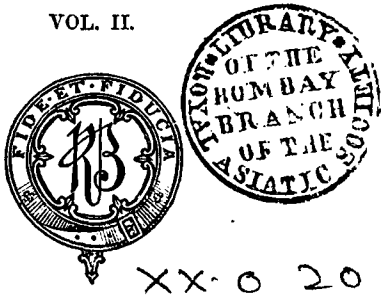
EDITED BY

S. R. TOWNSHEND MAYER.

VOL. II.



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III.

"A New Spirit of the Age."

(*Continued.*)

III.

"A NEW SPIRIT OF THE AGE."

(Continued.)

THERE is of course a time when boys and very young men have found great pleasure in the scenes alluded to in the last paragraph but one of the preceding letter; they have enjoyed all "the fun of the fair." But there comes a period of life when one must deeply regret to see time wasted over such books as "Harry Lorrequer."

The amount of popularity they obtained, and similar works, or worse, still obtain, is part of the long-enduring mania for the vile burlesques which are still paramount to a considerable

extent in so-called literature, and to a preponderating extent at theatres and numerous other places of public amusement.

Miss Barrett concludes her letter in a very characteristic manner. She evidently feels how, by comparison, the writings of a gentleman and scholar like Sir Henry Taylor rise into a purer atmosphere by the side of Lever's rollicking works, and it occurs to her that perhaps some of her remarks on the former, and on Mrs. Norton, had a tone of bitterness that almost seemed to approach personality, though nothing of that kind could have been intended; while, in the largeness of her generous nature, she even hints that possibly her estimate of others may be somewhat one-sided, if not too harsh. As for me, I thoroughly agree with every word she says about

Lever's boisterous books, and his capital fellowship none the less.

The tone of pathos in the closing paragraph mainly recognises a brief explanation I made to her concerning the cruel domestic injuries endured by the lady she had criticised—under the influence of "prejudice," I can have little doubt.

The last critique of an analytical kind that has appeared, so far as I am aware, upon the works in general of Sir Henry Taylor, will be found in "Our Living Poets," by H. Buxton Forman (1871); and it will be interesting to compare his views, which are chiefly analytical, with those of Miss Barrett (1844), which are almost entirely synthetical. Mr. Forman goes through all the principal works in prose and poetry of Sir Henry Taylor, with his usual precision and completeness in respect of the dramatic works, giving

an outline of the story in each case, and portraying the leading characters. It would be doing Mr. Forman injustice not to say that he was also synthetical on most great occasions; and he sums up his critique in these words:—

"What we have most to thank Sir Henry Taylor for is the large and statesmanlike intelligence with which, in each of his five historical plays ('Philip van Artevelde' being two distinct plays), he has studied and mastered an historical situation of no mean significance, and the large and craftsmanlike intelligence with which he has embodied the situation in each instance when mastered. He carries us with him to the times and places of his plays, and sets us in the midst of stir and turbulence, shows us individual life at struggle amid the throes of national life, and gives us the supreme

enjoyment that dramatists above all men can give us, of standing 'calm and supercilious' among the lifelike movements of a mimic world, to pass away at will out of its turmoil and agony and bloodshed —keeping the pleasure, and the lessons, and the knowledge, and leaving the pain behind."—pp. 465-6

Now the remarkable part of the comparison about to be instituted lies in the fact that, while Miss Barrett takes a totally opposite view of the writings in question, she would nevertheless have agreed, in all probability, with every admiring word Mr. Forman has written about Sir Henry Taylor in respect of the degree of excellence displayed.

XLII. "Wednesday Morning.

"My dear Mr. Horne,—I suppose by an opinion upon Taylor, you mean no-

thing elaborate—and indeed I am not qualified for it without a little study, having read 'Van Artevelde' once in a hurry long ago, and no work of his subsequently at all. In fact, as you may have imagined, Taylor, who is understood, I understand, by many men of understanding, to be the great poet of the day, is, to my apprehension, scarcely a poet at all, and stands coldly on the outside of my sympathies. Consider! a dramatic poet without passion! what does *that* amount to? A contemplative poet without a heaven of ideality above his head! what shall we call *that?* a rhythmetical writer who denies the distinct element of poetry!" [This is a reference to Sir H. Taylor's various Prefaces and Essays.] "How can we respect *that?* A man of talent without genius, probably resumes it all.

"It appears to me that what was said most unjustly of Byron (who, because he had more than his due fame once, or, at least, who had more exclusive fame than was due to him once, is now denied his just honours—yes, by Mr. Horne, as well as by others), namely, that he wrote eloquence rather than poetry—is the very criticism for Mr. Taylor. Yet, an orator without impulse and exaltation! what does that amount to?

"He has, moreover, to do him justice, an excellent 'trick of rhetoric,' and more than a trick; for his thoughts last to the end of his sentences—if not extending (which they do not—there is no *superfluity* of thought) beyond them. He is eloquent in his good sense. His diction is flowing and harmonious, and the 'flowing' may be said of it advisedly, because

it always finds its own level. His understanding works within it clearly and satisfactorily; his sentiments have a certain attitude of nobleness, which is the highest point in him; and he has a constructive power in the framing of a story, which goes the farther probably with the majority of his readers. For the rest, he may crown the faculty of the understanding, but he cannot make a king of it; he may place it in the niche before an altar, but he cannot make a god of it. He remains manifestly an atheist among poets—an infidel in poetry, with arid lines of schism marked hard on his forehead. Where a believing poet, stooping from his elevation, is genial and fresh, he is only as sensible as ever. Poetry has avenged herself upon him. Because he has rejected the mysteries of her highest skies

no dew has fallen from them on the lowest of his flowers. They grow in a certain way, to be sure; he waters them from a watering-pot; but no drop of dew has impearled them with lustre, nor wakened them into fragrance. There is a dusty-city feel in the very touch and smell of the leaves. He who has denied the mysteries shall not be happy in the simplicities.

"After all, the right way of looking at the works of Mr. Taylor may be to derive from them a proof of that divinity of poetry which he has attempted to disprove. He is a false prophet, from whose very successes and triumphs may be deduced the falsity of his mission—a Mahomet (say) whose sword, bloody to the hilt, disproves his altar. From this man we may learn what poetry is. A man of high intellect, active hopes, noble

sentiments, and instructed philosophy, and of confidence in his attributes; what more does he need? Nothing, he says. He makes a theory on the strength of his deprivations. Because he works within limits, he blasphemes space. What does his work want? Nothing, he says. Something, the whole world may see! Yes, and it may learn what the essence of poetry *is* by the thing wanting in Mr. Taylor's work.

"*Have* I read 'Festus'? Certainly I have. Do you not remember how I told you of my having asked somebody to read it, and how the somebody confounded me by answering that he was stopped short in the first pages by the 'indecency and blasphemy'? *That* was Mr. Townsend, the 'man of law,'—a man, too, not without poetry in the depths of his soul—albeit with that high, thick

Chinese wall built all around it! Oh, yes! I was much struck by 'Festus,' and it was only by accident that I did not ask you whether you would not do honour to the author of it. You told me yourself he was a man of genius, and of no ordinary genius he is undoubtedly. Both the 'Festus' and the supplement apologetic to it, which appeared in the *Monthly Repository** (I think) filled me with admiration.

"*He* [the author of "Festus"] is a man for heights and depths—is he not? A man of great thoughts. Still, the misfortune of that poem is that it is formed upon Goethe's, and has thus no originality of design. Its *fault* is an extraordinary inequality, so that really one falls down precipices continually,

* It was first printed in J. A. Heraud's *Monthly Magazine.*

and from pinnacles of grandeur into profundities of madness. Parts of the poem are as bad and weak as is well possible to be conceived of; and moreover (to do justice to Mr. Townsend) there is an occasional coarseness and gratuitous indelicacy, which the poet's noble conceptions had ill prepared one to be tolerant of. Also, I will not say that there is not some overdaring in relation to divine things, the locutorship of the Holy Ghost being among them.

"But when all is said, what poet-stuff remains! what power! what fire of imagination, worth the stealing of Prometheus! A true poet indeed, and, I believe, a poet incognito; for I never heard anybody speak of him, or write of him [1844], out of Heraud's magazine. The periodical critics let him

drop as if he scorched their fingers (which I dare say he did) just like a coal, and said nothing about it. . . . .

"E. B. B.

"I am glad you like the mottoes, and I lay up the compliment about being a 'woman of business,' because I never, no, never, received the like before, nor am I likely to do so again. The Macaulay article (to return) was as well done as if it had been brooded over for a month by the *genus snail*—and of course I perceived where the taste worked, or rather did not work.

"Will this motto fit Bailey?

> 'A poet hidden
> In the light of thought.'—*Shelley.*"

I may remark on this letter that the author of "Festus" is rightly estimated by Miss Barrett. In my opinion his

poem shows him to be "a man of great thoughts,"—indeed, of the greatest—nothing beyond them has been conceived. With reference to what Miss Barrett terms his "profundities of badness," I may add that his bigotry, even to fanaticism, is as astounding as his genius.

I may here once more notice the powerful influence of habit. Surely one Person of the Trinity should not be regarded as more sacred than another. The name of "God" is constantly used throughout that poem, and occasionally repeated eight or nine times, in one form or another, in the course of a single page, and the fair critic never makes any objection. As to our public places, the name of God is very often used in a theatre, without the least token of dissent from the audience; but

let anybody on the stage pronounce the name of either of the two other Persons of the Trinity, and there cannot be the remotest doubt of the sort of reproof that would be immediately administered from every part of the house.

XLIII. Saturday Night [no date, no postmark].

"My dear Mr. Horne,—I know a part and only a part of the thunder and lightning—but far too much, with my window shut down. The *Westminster Review* I never see. I may assure you truly that I have read the various reviews in question with pain and indignation—and also with another modification of feeling still more depressing. The *New Monthly's* bitter word—'Carlyle is said to have knocked a window out of his century,' etc., made me feel *stung* to cry out, 'Me, me, adsum quæ feci.'

"Turn it however as we may, although the book is assuredly unequal, and shows marks of wanting *unity* in some of its important departments—although if you had had more time, and the work to yourself, you would have made a better and more proportionate book—still, the slaying fault, we may both be very sure, is by no means in the book, but in the envy, malice, and all uncharitableness on every side of us. It is the elemental matter which produces the storm, and not the oak-wood which it rages in. Why we should be surprised or startled I do not know. The vanity of a man is the vulgar form of his sensibility, and as all the gods know, some men have no other sensibility. It is as hard to praise a vain man as to blame him—and if you don't praise him at all, you don't gain much by it. To

write a 'New Spirit of the Age' is an aspiration towards martyrdom unnecessary and supererogatory in a poet and a dramatic poet—in an 'unacted dramatist!' You might have had your share of the world's cruelty without it, we should think. Only you are so aspiring!

"Let them rave! That the book does not deserve their abuse we know as well as they themselves do—and there is no need to know better. What turns *against* it is simply the worm—or the friend of the worm, wormy, and right wormily!

"And were it otherwise, this book is an accident of your literary life. You have other books to live by. This book, although worthy of all our respect for the thought and talent expended in it, and especially for the honesty and high-mindedness everywhere obvious in *it*,

is certainly not worthy of being the subject of one over-anxious or painful thought in your mind.

"Let them rave, I say—and that reminds me, if you have no objection, will you tell me that Tennyson is not among the 'waiters to see.' I shall be glad to know that he is not one; if he is not satisfied I shall be surprised. But if he 'waits to see' I shall be thunderstruck still more.

"Do not waver in the second edition for any of their cries of dumb beasts.

"For E. B. B.—she has only to be grateful to you. Oh, one feels so stupidly constrained in speaking of oneself. Why should it be so?

"Bear in your mind, then, with regard to me, that I thoroughly understand the fulness both of your kindness and your integrity. You are my friend, I hope;

but you do not on that account lose the faculty of judging me, or the right of judging me frankly. I do loathe the whole system of personal compliment as a consequence of a personal interest, and I beseech you not to suffer yourself *ever* by any sort of kind impulse from within, or extraneous influence otherwise, to say or modify a word relating to me. The notice as it stands can be called 'inadequate' only in one way—that you enter on no analysis of my poetical claims in it. In every other respect you know it is *extravagantly laudatory*. You have rouged me up to the eyes. In fact, the intention of being kind is so visible in that article, that if I had read it as relating to another person, I should have been quite sure of the person being in some way personally connected with you.

"Now mark! If in the second edition

you do enter on the subject of the poetry, what is likely to be the end of it? You have spoken kindly of my poetry sometimes; but I do not know your precise estimate of it. I say I do not know—but I may perhaps have my thoughts on the subject—my fancies—for *I* too (like Mr. Westwood) can look a little way into a post; and there is a dreadful possibility (at least) in my eyes, that you may be led to say something to please me which might be said in violence to your colder judgment. Not that you would do so consciously! I know you would not. But I wish you to bear in your mind—first, that under circumstances which are conceivable it would be better to leave the notice as it is; and secondly, that in any case of your approaching the subject of my poetry, you will please me best by speaking out the truth as it

occurs to you, broadly, roughly, coarsely, in its whole dimensions. I set more price on your sincerity than on your praise, and consider it more closely connected with the quality called kindness. Recollect that these people who offer a pin to me that they may prick you with it in passing, do not care a pin for me. The *New Monthly*, who says so courteously 'all Greek and passion,' would probably say, 'all twaddle and trumpery' if it was reviewing me. I understand *that* fully! If I wanted any kindness I should go to you and not to them. And now I want kindness the rarest of all nearly—which is truth.

"This is a preface to what I am going to reply to your request about the proofs, etc. How it is possible for me to translate 'all my principal poems' into prose for your information, I am sure I don't

know. But, the preface being understood, and the conditions,—viz., that you do not suffer yourself to be driven into a violent resolution of trying to say certain things, and that I am not expecting such things to be said—I will send you whatever I can in the way of proofs. My private opinion is that you had better leave the notice unenlarged, and I am most grateful to you as it is. *But* if you enlarge it you must speak out the whole truth, or I will not be instrumental in helping you to information. Now, mind! your best compliment to me is the truth at all times, without reference to sex or friendship. I excuse the unbonneting. You are Orion, and I can estimate you, and neither of us mind the buzz of these wasps.

"You must understand that it is miserable to stand before you as somebody 'noticed inadequately,' who desires

another obolus in the second edition for the sake of 'Dead Pan,' etc.! The very thought of it has made me feel reserved towards you about my new book.

"Yes—Leigh Hunt's 'Godiva' I have, but unfortunately I lent it to somebody a few days ago. Can you wait for it? How long can you wait? I fancied that in your notice of Tennyson's you had intentionally waived any comparison. Yet Hunt's has the palm, I fancy. I think by recollection that it has.

"I hope my book will be out in a few weeks now. It fags me and over-excites me too much. Perhaps you will think me improved? Perhaps—I seem to myself to have more strength. I only wish that souls and bodies would draw together.

"I wish that in this second edition of yours you would give Mary Howitt room to take her full stature. She ap-

pears in the book simply as Mrs. Howitt, William's wife, whereas his reputation has grown from the stem of hers. Her prose is inferior, but her poetry will live, I think. Then Mrs. Trollope is too hardly treated for justice. At the end of my paper—and of your meekness!

"Ever and gratefully yours,

"E. B. B."

Allusion having been made to Landor with reference to "Napoleon the First," an extract from one of Miss Barrett's private letters will prove interesting in the shape of a fragment of literary vengeance which the poet bequeathed to the Conqueror:—

XLIV.

"Your 'Life of Napoleon' touched me very much; and what I estimated was that we are not suffered in this, as in

some other animated narratives, to be separated from our higher feelings without our consciousness. I like the tone of thought distinguishable through, and from, the cannonading,—the half sarcasm dropped, as unaware, among the pseudo glories which are the subjects of description. 'The dead say nothing.' There are fine things, too, more than I can count, particularly with the book out of sight. The Duke d'Enghien's death has haunted me, with the concluding words on human power—that 'effluence of mortality already beginning to decay.' The book's fault is its inequality of style; in fact, that you didn't write it all; and I am consistent enough not to complain of that. Did you ever see Mr. Landor's epigram upon Napoleon? He was so kind as to give it to me, the only evening I ever spent in his company,—and here it is:—

Τίς ποτε, Ναπόλεον, τὰ σὰ πρῶτα καὶ ὕστατα γράψει
Ἔργα; Χρόνος τέκνων αἵματι τερπόμενος.' "

Receiving this epigram while on a visit with a mutual lady-friend in the country, I requested her the next time she called on Miss Barrett to hand her the following paraphrastic translation,—

"Napoleon! thy deeds beyond compeers,
Who shall write, thrillingly?—
The Father of Years!
And—with the blood of children—willingly."

Feeling that there was another side to the question, I requested the same lady to hand also another epigram to the fair secluded classic,—

"Holy Alliance!—Time can scarcely tell
To heaven or hell,
What blood and treasure sank into the void
Of husht-up night,
For 'Divine Right,'—
Which that one man destroyed!"

This subject naturally leads to recollections of the first great French Revolution,—to Carlyle's wonderfully graphic work on that subject,—and to several letters from Miss Barrett concerning Carlyle, which were printed in the critical work previously mentioned. But the following letter was *not* printed, having arrived some days too late. The references to theological dogmas are characterised by the writer's usual independence of thought, and force of expression:—

XLV.

"It is impossible to part from this subject without touching upon a point of it we have already glanced at by an illustration, when we said that his object was to discover the sun, and not to specify the landscape. He is, in fact,

somewhat indefinite in his ideas of 'faith' and 'truth.' In his ardour for the quality of belief, he is apt to separate it from its objects; and although in the remarks on tolerance in his 'Hero Worship' he guards himself strongly from an imputation of latitudinarianism yet we cannot say but that he sometimes overleaps his own fences, and sets us wondering whither he would be speeding. This is the occasion of some disquiet to such of his readers as discern that the *truth itself* is a more excellent thing than our *belief* in the truth; and that, *à priori*, *our belief does not make the truth.* But it is the effect, more or less, of every abstract consideration that we are inclined to hold the object of abstraction some moments longer in its state of separation and analysis than is at all necessary or desirable. And after all,

the right way of viewing the matter is that Mr. Carlyle intends to teach us something, and not everything; and to direct us to a particular instrument, and not to direct us in its specific application. It would be a strange reproach to offer to the morning star, that it does not shine in the evening.

"For the rest, we may congratulate Mr. Carlyle and the dawning time. We have observed that individual genius is the means of popular advancement. A man of genius gives a thought to the multitude, and the multitude spread it out as far as it will go, until another man of genius brings another thought, which attaches itself to the first, because all truth is assimilative, and perhaps even reducible to that monadity of which Parmenides discoursed. Mr. Carlyle is gradually amassing a greater reputation

than might have been looked for at the hands of this polytechnic age, and has the satisfaction of witnessing with his living eyes the outspread of his thought among nations. That this Thought—the ideas of this prose poet—should make way with sufficient rapidity for him to live to see the progress, is a fact full of hope for the coming age; even as the other fact, of its first channel furrowing America (and it is a fact that Carlyle was generally read there before he was truly recognized in his own land), is replete with favourable promise for that great country, and indicative of a noble love of truth in it passing the love of dollars."

The following fragment of a letter was not intended for the work previously mentioned, but might very well have

been included in it—although I should have proposed here and there to interpolate an adverse word:—

XLVI.

"I have been reading Carlyle's 'Past and Present.' There is nothing new in it, even of Carlyleism—but almost everything true. But tell me, why should he call the English people a silent people, whose epics are in *action*, and whose Shakspere and Milton are mere accidents of their condition? Is that true? Is not this contrary, most extremely, to truth?" [Indeed I do think it very true.] "This English people—has it not a nobler, a fuller, a more abounding and various literature than all the peoples of the earth, 'past or present,' dead or living, all except one—the Greek people? It is 'fact,' and not 'sham,' that our

literature is the fullest, and noblest, and most suggestive—do you not think so? I wish I knew Mr. Carlyle, to look in his face and say, 'We are a most singing people—a most eloquent and speechful people—we are none of us silent, except the undertaker's *mutes*.'

"Most truly and loquaciously yours,

"E. B. BARRETT."

Had I been challenged so stoutly—nay, charged home at the point of the pen—in our present day, I should certainly have taken side with Thomas Carlyle. By a "singing people" must be meant either poets or vocalists, and in both cases, especially the former, the men of genius have always been exceptions. We all know how Shakspere and Milton were regarded in their own day; and if such men now lived, we see

clearly how they would be treated by managers of theatres, and by nearly every living publisher — for the good business reason that "they wouldn't sell."

The next letter has reference to a paper of mine which appeared at the conclusion of "A New Spirit of the Age."

XLVII.

"I differ with you about Wordsworth, and have suggested several phrases marginally, which with a little addition would set us on a level again on that ground; only you probably will not desire it.

"See, here it is. Wordsworth's principle is, that *nothing mean is in nature.* True, as to nature herself. *You* say, to Wordsworth alone it is

true: if anybody else calls a daisy noble, he is an imitator by that sign. The daisy is a mean flower to all the world except William Wordsworth.

"In which you are wrong, O Orion! because that daisy under the heel of a clown has a lesson, if sought for; yes, and a lesson 'apostolical' for the clown, though he never heard of the master.

"If you had confined yourself to a reproof of the cant of the naturals, who, because buttercups are not mean, will see nothing in nature except buttercups, and mimic the master's emotion as they look between the petals; if you had denounced this cant, as feeling at second-hand—which is *not* feeling but cant, and only more morally innocent (not less fatiguing) than that of Byron's imitators with their broken hearts instead

of neckcloths—I should agree, aye, go with you altogether. But—no time, you see!

"Ever yours,

"E. B. B."

Miss Barrett has the best of it, and I told her so. The remarks she referred to were modified in accordance with her argument. I merely showed that whatever greatness has originated in Wordsworth's mind from his habit of refusing "to share any glory with his subject" by the systematic selection of things devoid of much obvious interest in themselves, and, as he often declares, on account of their meanness to the eye, or to the general impression of mankind, it is much to be doubted if the adoption of this principle *by others* will not lead them downwards in the

scale of enthusiasm. It may tend to throw them exclusively upon their individualities, which may not inaptly be represented by this paraphrase of a witty old couplet—

> "My thought is great because the object's mean:
> Then 'twould be greater were no object seen."

This must not be misunderstood. It is such poems as Wordsworth's "Laodamia"—the scriptural grandeur of simplicity in "Michael"—the high-wrought fervours of his immortal "Ode" (and not his illustrations of the "meanest objects") that all lovers of poetry so deeply admire.

A few paragraphs from the work in question, extracted from the critical estimates of Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, and Tennyson, may not be unacceptable; but I should probably have hesitated to give them, had not the work

been long out of print. The letters containing them followed each other in rapid succession.

"LONDON, 1843.

"Mr. Wordsworth began his day with a dignity and determination of purpose which might well have startled the public and all its small poets and critics, his natural enemies. He laid down fixed principles in his prefaces, and carried them out with rigid boldness in his poems; and when the world laughed, he bore it well. With a severe hand he tore away from his art the encumbering artifices of his predecessors, and he walked upon the pride of criticism with greater pride. He laid his hand upon the Pegasean mane, and testified that it was not floss-silk. He testified that the ground was not all

lawn or bowling-green; and that the forest trees were not clipped upon a pattern. He scorned to be contented with a tradition of beauty, or with an abstraction of the beautiful. He refused to work, as others had done, like those sculptors who make all their noses in the fashion of that of the Medicean Venus, until no one has his own nose, nature being 'cut to order.' A minute observer of exterior nature, his humanity seems nevertheless to stand between it and him; and he confounds those two lives—not that he loses himself in the contemplation of things, but that he absorbs them in himself and renders them Wordsworthian. Chaucer and Burns made the most of a daisy, but left it still a daisy; Wordsworth leaves it transformed into his thoughts. This is the sublime of egotism, disinterested

as extreme. It is on the entity of the man Wordsworth that the vapour creeps along the hill—and the mountains 'are a feeling.' To use the language of the German schools, he makes a subjectivity of his objectivity. Beyond the habits and purposes of his individuality he cannot carry his sympathies; and of all powerful writers he is the least dramatic. Another reason, however, for his dramatic inaptitude, is his deficiency in passion. He is passionate in his will and reason, but not in his senses and affections; and perhaps scarcely in his fancy and imagination. His 'Poems of the Imagination' settle that question. Like many other great men he can be dull and prolix. If he has not written too many sonnets it may be doubted if he has not burned too few. Gravity and moral aim are

Wordsworth's most prevailing characteristics. His very cheerfulness is a smile over the altar—a smile of benediction which no one dares return—and expressive of good-will rather than sympathy. . . . . After the public had denied Wordsworth the possession of any of the highest faculties of the mind, during twenty years, the same public has seen good to reward him with the highest faculties in excess." . . . .

With regard to Leigh Hunt,—

"Something very like the principle here announced is discoverable in Chaucer and Shakspere, who usually give the bane and antidote in close relation, do justice to every one on all sides, and never insist upon a good thing or a bad one; but display an impartiality which often amounts to the humorous.

Leigh Hunt's manner of doing this was the chief offence; for while the elder poets left the readers to their own conclusions, our author chose to take the case upon himself, so that he identified himself with the provocation of those readers who were defeated in the expectation of a different decision.

It is scarcely necessary to say that none of these remarks were from Miss Barrett's pen. The following relates to Tennyson:—

"The poetic fire is one simple and intense element in human nature; it has its source in the divine mysteries of our existence; it develops with the first abstract delight of childhood, the first youthful aspiration towards something beyond our mortal reach; and eventually becomes the master passion of those who are possessed with it in the highest de-

gree, and the most ennobling influence that can be exercised upon the passions of others. At times, and in various degrees, all are open to the influence of the poetic element. Its objects are palpable to the external senses, in proportion as individual perception and sensibility have been habituated to contemplate them with interest and delight; and palpable to the imagination in proportion as an individual possesses this faculty, and has habituated it to ideal subjects and profoundly sympathetic reflections. If there be a third condition of its presence, it must be that of a certain consciousness of dreamy glories in the soul, with vague emotions, aimless impulses, and prophetic sensations, which may be said to tremble on the extreme verge of the fermenting source of that poetic fire by which the life of humanity

is purified and adorned. The first and second of these conditions must be clear to all; the last will not receive so general an admission, and may not be so intelligible to everybody. . . . .

"Perhaps the first spell cast by Mr. Tennyson—the master of many spells—he cast upon the ear. His power as a lyrical versifier is remarkable. The measures flow softly, or roll nobly from his pen, as well one as the other. He can gather up his strength like a serpent in the gleaming coil of a line; or dart it out straight and free. Nay, he will write you a poem with nothing in it except music, and, as if its music were everything, it shall charm your soul. Be this said, not in reproach, but in honour of him and of the English language, for the learned sweetness of his numbers. . . . .

"In music and colour he was equalled by Shelley; but in *form*, clearly defined, with no apparent effort, and no harsh strides or lines, Tennyson stands unrivalled.

"His ideality is both adornative and creative, although up to this period [1844] it is ostensibly rather the former than the latter. His ideal faculty is either satisfied with an exquisitely delicate arabesque painting, or clears the ground before him so as to melt and disperse all other objects into a suitable atmosphere or aerial perspective, while he takes horse on a passionate impulse, as in some of his ballads, which seem to have been panted through without a single pause. This is the case in 'Oriana,' in 'Locksley Hall,' in 'The Sisters,' etc. Or, at other times, selecting some ancient theme, he stands collected and self-con-

tained, and rolls out, with an impressive sense of dignity, orb after orb of that grand melancholy music of blank verse which leaves long vibrations in the reader's memory, as in 'Ulysses,' the divine 'Œnone,' or the 'Morte d'Arthur.'

"Alfred Tennyson may be considered generally under four different aspects—developed separately, or in collective harmony, according to the nature of the subject—that is to say, as a poet of fairy-land and enchantment; as a poet of profound sentiments (as Wordsworth is in the intellect and moral feelings); as a painter of pastoral nature; and as a delineator and representer of tragic emotions, chiefly with reference to one particular passion.

"Those critics who have seized upon the poet's early lines—his Claribels, Lilians, Adelines, Madelines—declaring

they were not natural beings of flesh and blood, have tried them by a false standard. They do not belong to the flesh and blood class. They are creatures of the elements of poetry. And for that reason they have a sensuous life of their own, as far removed from the ordinary bodily conditions as from pure spirit. They are transcendentalisms of the senses; examples of the Homeric εἴδωλα, or rather, if we may venture to trace the genealogical history of such fragile creatures — the descendants of those εἴδωλα, as modified by the influence of the romantic ages. . . . ."

This critique on Tennyson was a joint production, but (excepting the opening paragraph) all the foregoing was contained in Miss Barrett's letters.

Such were the views taken of these great writers in 1844; and although very

much additional matter would be required in order to do justice to the poems given to the world by the Laureate since that date, I am not aware of anything of importance that requires alteration in what was there set down. Some slight differences of opinion on trifling questions occurred, now and then, which were easily accommodated. As my name only was to stand as sponsor for the entire contents of the two volumes, of course the casting vote was mine, but I seldom availed myself of it in any direct opposition to Miss Barrett, nor was there reason to do so. Some degree of esoteric amusement may no doubt be derived from the private exhibition of that picture (Vol. I., p. 187) of two authoresses secretly arrayed against two authors, on matters of theology and ethics—one of the latter being arraigned as an old

offender, the other being a counsel for the defence. But if there were no better defender than I at that time, there certainly is one now. After an absence of nearly twenty years in the South Seas, the very first occasion of my reunion with old friends was at the uncovering of the memorial bust of Leigh Hunt in the Cemetery of Kensal Green. On that occasion an address was delivered by Lord Houghton in one of the side-rooms of the Chapel, from no rostrum or oratorial platform, but simply standing upon one of the chairs. From this very unprepossessing "vantage-ground" and with a crowd inconveniently close underneath, was given, with the unaffected ease and pathos of that simple eloquence that comes direct from the heart through the brain, a brief discourse, or rather a tender intellectual monody, gracefully

setting forth the works and character of Leigh Hunt. Those who, like myself, had been intimately acquainted with the poet, the essayist, and cruelly-imprisoned politician, constituted the most exacting audience that could possibly have been collected for the occasion. Lord Houghton's monody was listened to with profound silence, slightly broken only by tokens of sympathy, and at the close was unanimously declared by those most competent to judge of it in all respects not only as satisfactory but perfect in every point that was touched upon. It was done with equal breadth and nicety. One remark in especial I treasured up as a happy explanation of many difficulties. It was that Leigh Hunt's entire sympathy with human nature was of that loving, one-sided kind that he seemed quite to ignore all the evil in the world

—it might in fact be said that "he had an absolute *superstition for good*" which made him unable to distinguish the many ills and evils that surround us. That is "the key" to most of the extreme, and now and then extravagant and provoking things he wrote, and used to say among private friends. Alluding, incidentally, to one of the most licentious of the French novels, he—his own life being absolutely pure—suddenly exclaims (in what book I forget, and quote from memory), "It is the greatest mistake possible to call such books immoral and wicked, when nothing of that kind is intended!—and while the girl has a real affection for her lover." He saw nothing but the love. I have heard him repeat most impressively certain lines which with almost any other person's delivery would seem shocking. It was the epi-

taph composed by a Dutchman—well known to some, but for obvious reasons little known generally—to be graven upon his own tombstone:—

> "Here lieth Martin Eltenbrod:
> Have mercy on his soul, O God!
> *As he* would have, *if he were God,*
> And *Thou* wert Martin Eltenbrod!" *

If these lines are read off boldly most people will be shocked; but when Leigh Hunt gave the two last lines, his voice lowered, he closed his eyes with solemn reverence, and bowed down his head in humility, which was impressive even to tears. Surely that makes all the difference? But again, when he "rallied" —as I remember on another occasion after repeating the same epitaph—some

* [Dr. George MacDonald informs me that this epitaph is said to be in Aberdeen Churchyard.—S. R. T. M.]

hearers would say—"That spoils all!"—for he exclaimed, "There now!—there was a *man!* a man for the Creator to be proud of. God must have felt that He had succeeded!" Regarded in an ordinary light, no doubt the words would seem highly irreverent, or worse,—but then the ordinary light is precisely the wrong light, and controverts what was meant by the speaker. The words are irreverent only upon the surface, while in their subtle undercurrent we are conscious that they only indicate that which we all know of the world containing so many gross instances not merely of *failures* in, but of disgraces to, humanity—brutal creatures who remind us of anything but a Divine Image, and compared with whom some of our domestic animals are far more to be regarded and respected. Some ears of corn come up mildewed

"blasting their wholesome brother,"—and so do some men. Any image-maker might disown them. I scarcely know how to believe in the antiquated proverb —ἐκ τοῦ κεράμου μέροπες εἰσὶν ἅπαντες, because it seems obvious that some men are *not* made of the same clay as others, or by the same potter's hand. It would appear as if a devil of some sort must have had "a finger" in the production of many of the images. And striking "likenesses" they certainly are. These latter remarks Leigh Hunt would not have made, because he only looked at the good side of things—the creations which were excellent.

Leigh Hunt lived so entirely in his own family circle, that he was unaware of certain peculiarities becoming of a kind to excite a feeling different from that which occupied himself. I have heard him

quite apologise to his wife and daughters for having expended eighteenpence at an old book-stall, explaining how useful and valuable the work would be to him,—and this at a time when the improvidence of others had brought him into trouble. "Yet in himself," as Lord Houghton so truly said, "he was a most self-denying man." He was fond of writing and talking about the country, but knew little of its *flora* and *fauna* beyond some dozen of flowers and half a dozen birds. A few flowers in a glass of water on his writing-table was to him a garden, and a "look-out" upon a distant green field was his country life. The rest was an imaginary Italy. I once heard him discourse while standing in front of a bed of winter cabbages covered with a sparkling hoar-frost, as though it were Nature's jewellery of emeralds and diamonds set in frosted

silver; and assuredly I have read something of a similar kind in one of his essays. But I have been recently reminded by Lord Houghton of a far more striking instance of a degree of simplicity that could not perceive there was anything ludicrous in its grave counsels, when earnestly exhorting a poor man, if he could not afford to buy flowers, to take home a handful of grass to his wife, so that they might contemplate Nature by that means. And I am sure that Leigh Hunt would have repeated it, and justified it by asking if it were not better than staring at each other over a bare deal table?

Here, however, I must leave him, with a thought and a sigh towards Kensal Green, and all its silent memorials.

IV.

"Psyche Apocalypté:"

A LYRICAL DRAMA.

PROJECTED BY E. B. B. AND R. H. H.

IV.

"PSYCHE APOCALYPTÉ."

RESPECTING the lyrical drama of "Psyche"—to which several references have been made in Miss Barrett's previous letters, but no fragment of which has ever seen the light—it is necessary to state at the outset (in order to prevent disappointment to her admirers) that the drama was never written, nor was any one scene of it put into verse. A few fragmentary lines only were jotted down, here and there. The subject and scope of the whole, however, will be found clearly expressed and designed, — as clearly, at any rate, as speculations dealing with intense mysteries of our

psychological nature can be made apparent through a poetical medium. The audience for such a drama, had it been written, would indeed have been "fit and few;" and for such only would it have been intended.

Some of the letters containing the first thoughts about this lyrical drama are missing. The following is the first directly bearing on the subject that I am able to find:—

XLVIII. "Tuesday.

"DEAR MR. HORNE,—I was not quite well, and was forced to break off writing, and begin again to-day. You will think me an 'eighth' sleeper now. Don't scruple to say what is in your mind about the subject. Remember, you suggested Greek instead of modern tragedy as a model for form. My idea, the terror

attending spiritual consciousness — the man's soul to the man—is something which has not, I think, been worked hitherto, and seems to admit of a certain grandeur and wildness in the execution. The awe of this soul-consciousness breaking into occasional lurid heats through the chasms of our conventionalities has struck me, in my own self-observation, as a mystery of nature very grand in itself—and is quite a distinct mystery from *conscience*. Conscience has to do with action (every thought being spiritual action), and not with abstract existence. There are moments when we are startled at the footsteps of our own being, more than at the thunders of God.

"Is it impracticable?—too shadowy, too mystic, for working dramatically?

"Think of 'Faust.' You could do anything. But you are judge as to what is

to be done or tried. Say yes, or no—and I am prepared for 'no' most.

"Truly yours,

"E. B. B."

My reply was to the effect that the subject could be worked dramatically, *i.e.*, in the spirit, everything breathing of stage-action being quite out of the question; that I would devise the characters, interlocutors, chorus and semi-choruses; make a construction of the movement, or action, of the whole; propose the locality (some unknown Greek island), the scenery, etc.; that the part of Psyche should be left entirely to her, with nearly all the lyrical portion, and I would do the rest. When the design and construction were completed, Miss Barrett was to receive a duplicate of the whole, so paged and marked that the different portions

of the writing could be carried on with a means of constant reference (and intercommunication), so as to move harmoniously under the two hands. The Greek form and a remote age were proposed as assisting to carry the drama quite out of present art, as the subject seemed rather to belong to *no* special time or place—if not to another world, at least to the world of spirits here below. This form was also proposed, because I fancied it would be most pleasing to her, if she ever lived to carry out the idea, which seemed to me very doubtful. The subject might seem to belong to modern thought; but she was reminded that she would have found among the old Greek philosophers most of the speculations we imagine to belong to modern times; and if she wished for further justification, and could not hope to find it in the Hebrew, she

would discover its shadow in the Sanskrit, as students of the Bhagavat Gita were fond of placing it at the earliest source of the mighty Nile of metaphysics which has flowed down to modern ages. With which piece of rather grim attempt at archaic pleasantry, the lady was "left to her own devices." Nevertheless, I saw there was something new to be "worked," as she expressed it, out of her subject.

How she clung to the idea, yet postponed its realisation, her letters have already shown. The following passage taken from one of the earliest I can find, is a presage of the improbability of our joint work ever being achieved :—

XLIX. "TORQUAY, May 6th, 1841.

"As to the drama, my questions won't turn their faces that way—although, *by*

the way—if it ever is completed by these degrees, you will have to take into partnership some successive generations of such as I am. But I don't ask about that, nor *pour le coup.*"

How this lyrical drama was to be entitled was the subject of several notes, and so were the names of the characters. That of "Cymon" was first proposed for the principal character (though subsequently changed to Medon), and the name of his foredoomed wife was left undecided. This was Miss Barrett's first rough draft of her proposed subject :—

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CYMON.
HIS WIFE.
DEAD SISTER'S CHILD.
PSYCHE (Cymon's Soul).
PHILOSOPHER (Utilitarian ?).
POET.

CHORUS of Earth-Spirits, or Ministering Heavenly Spirits.

"An old tomb. Child sitting there, 'because it is convenient.' His question upon the letters graven on the stone, [addressed] to Cymon, a man self-supposed to be complete in all experiences, and prepared for all events; wise and strong.——Argument between the Child and Man, the prospective and retrospective, upon life and death,—the one inclusive of the other.——Child, in despite of morals, sleeps on the grave.

"Low chorus of Ministering Spirits, guarding, not the dead, but the living. Voice and vision of Psyche—to the Man. His dread, and drooping of sense before that manifestation of the Inward. Can 'man see God and live'? Can he see the 'image of God'? Converse between the Man and the Psyche—the one, yet contrarious, and their mutual horror of the unity. In regard to the hereafter, he

shudders less at the thought of abstract death than of Psyche. The Curse. Psyche's voice dies away in the murmur of approaching multitudes.

"Cymon's marriage festival. Cymon and his bride. But Psyche haunts Love with mystic and mournful voices. The bridal singing broken by the [audible] wail of Psyche. Bridegroom's terror and flight. And most admired disorder among the guests.

"Cymon consults philosophy. Interview with the Philosopher. Psyche mocks all.

"Has recourse to poetry. Interview with the Poet—who refuses to help him against Psyche.

"Cymon and the Child, among the mountains, and flying from Psyche into Nature. The Child's voice (and Nature's) echoed by Psyché.——They find

the abandoned bride dead among the snow.

"Cymon *dares* (bears) to look upon Psyche by the force of woe.

"Cathedral scene, and burial. Dread desolation of the Psyche and the Man beside the filled new tomb. *Vision of the Cross*—and Psyche being softened and beautified, and the Man purified and exalted in the ghastly light of that Divine Agony, *love* has its issue in *unity* and self-reconciliation. Cymon fears Psyche no more, by *the force of religion.*"

The following letter bears no date or postmark, but speaks for itself in all respects:—

L.

"Your suggestions are excellent, and bring with them, suggestively, too, new

courage. I like the Genii very much indeed.

"Should the Islanders (the Islander Chorus, I mean) represent the five senses, or the conventionalities which encrust the senses, and so body beyond body—opaquer than the natural body? Will you consider? Perhaps both, in a measure.

"It seems to me that we should avoid allegory in any cold strict sense, and hold fast the individualities of the human beings. It was only for this (to suggest the individuality of the principal personage) that I wrote down 'Cymon'—not from any especial preference for the name. What will you have? Philaster — Arctas — Crates — Leon — Theanor — Herman? I am not sure I like either much.

"For the bride — Evadne — Luce — Bertha (no)—Bianca—Violante—Viola—

Elinda—Earine—a beautiful name which brings beauty of all sorts to remembrance, besides Jonson's Sad Shepherd. You remember Earine—

> 'Who had her very being and her name
> From the first knolls and buddings of the spring.'

Maricance—or shall it be a German, to go with Herman? The Princess Royal might be suited out of this catalogue. Decide yourself.

"And as to the title generally—why, what shall be said? *That* is a graver point. 'Psyche Unveiled' would surely do—although it did suggest to my own associations Mr. Foster's 'Mahometanism Unveiled,' and titles of the kind.

'THE UNVEILED; A PSYCHOLOGICAL MYSTERY,'

would that be better?—anything better?—out of Mr. Foster's way, and the

'Nature Displayed' people's. You speak of a Greek-English title, such as 'The Apocalypse of Psyche,' or 'Psyche Apocalyptic.' Oh, it won't do. Will it? Shall it be more Greek than English? But then nobody, not most bodies at least, will know what we mean. 'Psyche, the Pursuer'?—or 'the Persecutor'?—'Psyche, the Terrible'?

"Well, I know what name you will choose for *me*, after all this. Perhaps a Greek one—and then it will begin with *μ*." [A very faint pencil reference at the bottom of the note looks like *μαινάς*.] "But it is hard upon me to expect an answer to such a question by an early post, when everybody admits that the title of a book, nowadays, takes more study than all the rest of it. You must think, yourself; and your first thought is better than the best of mine in the rear.

"I was pleased in every way by your expression of satisfaction with the rough outline I dared to send you—I felt it to be absolute daring—pleased every way, not the least with the sympathy of feeling. Only my head aches so that I can scarcely see to write down whatever part of the pleasure would be otherwise expressive. Oh, I have an agreeable sense of writing nonsense — convinced with the close of every sentence. Can you make out anything? I can't write any more.

"Ever truly yours,

"E. B. B."

The next letter, though bearing no date, was evidently written a day or two after the above :—

LI.

"Is Medon a name for our 'island

monster'? Œnone, for the lady? I doubt. I don't know. My psyche is 'perplexed in the extreme,' upon this important point of nomenclature. And important it is, in a measure. Blowsabella wouldn't do for a heroine—not for us, at least. . . . .

"Oh, yes; you will settle all about the scenes. Your additional suggestions give a spring upwards to the whole scheme,—just what the encouragement of your approval and consent has given to *me*. Yet, in spite of all, I shall remain nervous to the last as to the temerity of working with you,—

> 'And you will be the best harpèr
> That ever took harp in hand—
> And I *should* be the best singèr
> That ever sang in this land.'

But as it is, O King Estruese, where will be the symmetry? The fault, at least

(as far as volition goes), will be with you.

"Yours, in harp and fellowship, and the minor key,

"E. B. B."

Accepting what had previously been proposed, as the subject of a psychological fable and plot, the following design and construction of Act I. was submitted in a letter to Miss Barrett:—

First sketch of the Plot, and sequence of Thoughts and Emotions:—

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEDON.
EVANTHE—his betrothed bride.
PSYCHE—the Soul of Medon.
PHILOSOPHER.
POET.
LEIRION—orphan child of Medon's sister.
CHORUS—of Heavenly Spirits.
CHORUS—of Islanders—"of the earth, earthy."
Genii, Spirits of the Island, etc.

The scene is in an unknown island of the Greek Archipelago.

Act I.

Scene I.—An old tomb, where Medon's father, mother, and sister are buried. Leirion is sitting among the flowers at the foot of the tomb.

Enter Medon. Dialogue between him and the Child,—the latter taking the lead by questions, the profound innocence of which impel Medon's thoughts and imagination into speculations upon life and death—and *his own identity*. The Child falls asleep at the foot of the tomb, as with embracing arms, while Medon is struggling with an impossible answer to those questions.

Chorus of Heavenly Spirits.

("Guarding the living, not the dead,"
—as your note has it,—say so, here,—

nothing can be finer than that, simply said, and not much worked out.)

The Chorus ceasing, a faint sound comes at intervals, and with broken pauses. Medon speaks, with strange apprehensions—as in the roots of his hair—of some invisible Presence:—

"It is some emanation from myself—
Yet stands apart from me! What art thou?—
speak!
Be manifest—nor hold me thus disfranchised,
Between two worlds!"

VOICE OF PSYCHE.

[This being your special idea—E. B. B. should write all the rest of this scene.]

Medon endeavours to reply to the Voice; makes signs in the air, as if his Soul, speaking within him, called for the adumbration,—the Presence.

Vision of Psyche, who says,

"I hear myself in thee—and I appear."

Eventually Medon awakes the Child for protection. Leirion wakes. Psyche vanishes. Medon hurries away dismayed, with the Child clasped in his arms; his head in the Child's bosom.

Scene II.—Evanthe's bower. A grove of arbutus and laurel on one side; on the other a lake with one large swan gliding in the distance. Evanthe is standing in the centre, looking at the sun setting behind the far mountains.

Enter Leirion, running. [This dialogue to be written by E. B. B.] Soon after, enter Medon, very slowly and guardedly. He is rather cold towards Evanthe; but she is full of affection.

The result of this Scene is that Medon recovers himself. He forgets his recent heaviness and perplexity of thought; and

(by an effort) the recent vision of Psyche. The effort becomes less and less necessary, and Evanthe is paramount. Love, for the time, has conquered, and their marriage festival shall no longer be delayed. He is so lost as not to bear in mind that the marriage had never been really determined on between them. But now his thoughts are full of it. He is anxious to think of nothing else. Arranges to assemble all on the Island—from the Poet and the Philosopher down to the aboriginal Islanders. Vision of happiness seen in the sunset clouds. Medon gives way to his impassioned imagination, and invokes all the Spirits of the Isle, since first it rose out of the sea, to be auspicious to his union with the beautiful Evanthe, and hover amidst the ascending spiral columns of the altar's incense.

" We hear thee, and we floating sing;
And through each wing
We wreathe the incense, rising, falling,—
Our island's sweetest echoes calling
From caves and coves,—
The birds and groves
Alike enthralling.
O, Medon! banish doubt and dole;—
A lover should forget his soul! "

End of the First Act.

It will thus be understood how two persons, who had never met, and, as it seemed, were not likely ever to meet, were to write a drama conjointly, the work being portioned out by agreement, each having a copy of the design and construction. The Poetess having agreed to the proposals as to the First Act, suggestions for the Second were sent to her, with an apology for a little delay. Her reply quickly ensued.

LII. "July 10th, 1841.

"My dear Mr. Horne,—I had your note yesterday, and have to-day the Second Act—and shall be sorry and remorseful all to-morrow until sure that you will give up the thought of 'Psyche' till you give up the cough. I am not a desperate hunter. I like waiting in the dew; and, provided we have the antlers, it may as well be in the afternoon as forenoon. Shall the clock make us quarrel? No, no.

"What made me write was indeed impatience—there is no denying it—only, not about the drama. Do you know what it is to be shut up in a room by oneself, to multiply one's thoughts by one's thoughts—how hard it is to know what 'one's thought is like'—how it grows and grows, and spreads and spreads, and ends in taking some supernatural

colour,—just like mustard and cress sown on [wet] flannel in a dark closet? First I begin with the simple impertinence of wondering why you didn't write to me—simple enough—although I don't call it altogether my own fault when I miss your letters. Then came the complex-*per*plexing 'in the extreme.'

"I was very sorry about the cough. Do not neglect it, lest it end as mine did, for a common cough striking on an *insubstantial* frame began my bodily troubles; and I know well what that suffering is, though nearly quite free from it now. So, let it be understood, consented and agreed to, and well approved on each side, that until your return to London, 'Psyche' is suspended.

"The new Act [Second] shall go to you in a day or two. Your 'spiriting'

is most excellently done, and the drama half alive already.

"Ever and truly yours,

"E. B. B."

Act II.

Scene I.—Where and what, to be settled. Altar, priests, marble statues. Medon's marriage festival. Guests, including islanders, etc. Celebrated by Choruses, Dances, etc. [All this to be written by E. B. B.] During this, "Psyche haunts Love with mystic and mournful voices," which Medon first hears —and, through the effect upon him, the voice of Psyche becomes audible to Evanthe, and then to all present. "The bridal singing is broken by the wail of Psyche." Guests in dismay. Medon's terror and flight. Terror and disorder of all present. Evanthe is paralysed, and

stands like one of the marble statues—every one else rushing away. Choruses and semi-choruses outside, as of some who return gradually. They sing of how the dying lights of the bridal altar and incense-urns fall upon the statues, including Evanthe among them, and at first scarcely noting the difference. [The Chorus of Spirits, as well as the marriage guests, to be written by E. B. B.; but perhaps I may interpolate a rough Semi-chorus of Islanders.]

Scene II.—A deep hollow in a rock. Voice of Psyche faintly heard, calling from within. Enter Medon, as if following, irresistibly attracted. "Converse between Medon and Psyche—one, yet contrarious,—and their mutual horror at the unity. In regard to the Hereafter, he shudders less at the thought

of abstract Death than of meeting Psyche."

Distant sounds, as of something terrible and multitudinous—whether of Elements or Spirits—or both.

Again those sounds. Psyche's voice resumes, but dies away in the noise of approaching multitudes. Different Choruses and Semi-choruses advancing. Psyche vanishes. Medon falls on his face.

The Curse (if you still wish to have it). This will comprise various Choruses and Semi-choruses—representing men, and all living creatures on earth. [E. B. B. to write the theological portions. As for me, "eat, or be eaten" will chiefly be the theme under the above head—large and sad enough.]

Scene III.—The Seashore. Rocks at

the back; sand below; the tide rising. Enter the Philosopher upon a rock above. His soliloquy, — tending to deny the sanity of all the finest intellects of (future) Germany and elsewhere—you see what is meant—reducing all things to the perception of the external senses, and all knowledge to analysis.

Enter Medon, who disputes this,—

"What is thy fine analysis,
Compared with anything entire?
Moments of pain—moments of bliss,
Are poor to Life's synthetic fire.
Dissect the blossom, leaf by leaf,—
Odour, form, colour, all expire;
Your knowledge feeds on ruin, grief,
And Nature weeps at man's perverse desire."

But the Philosopher says,—

"It is the mastery of the whole we seek:
As Nature builds by small degrees, so we
Un-build, to learn her workings—piece by piece."

The Philosopher now proceeds, as you propose, to argue for a rigid exclusion of all transcendental speculations, and a close adherence to utilities in their most literal sense. To be laughed at in some spiritual way of your own—"mocking" you call it, in some bird-like fashion out of the air, no doubt—by Psyche. She will tell him, if you please, that the analytical mind is not the finest order of mind, whatever he may think; but the Philosopher, being unable to see Psyche, refuses to admit that he hears the Voice. A voice requires corporeal organs, and it is impossible to be heard without. Psyche now, in louder tones, prompts Medon to declare aloud that the analytical mind is a second-rate order of mind. Whereat the Philosopher asserts, while losing his temper, that he does not hear the voice of Psyche in reality,—in

fact, he denies the evidence of his senses, not being very well to-day. While thus discoursing, he steps over the edge of the rock, and falls into the sea, the tide having risen. He is saved by the nets of some of the poor savage Islanders, to a Chorus of their own. Enter the Poet. Dialogue with Medon, the latter complaining of being haunted, and otherwise deeply tormented by Psyche. "The Poet refuses to help him against Psyche." *Exeunt* Medon and Poet, at opposite sides. Enter Chorus of Islanders. They lament having lost a good haul of fish by saving a man who told them to find their high and due reward in the self-approval of humanity and conscience. *Exeunt* Islanders. Enter Chorus of those who were guests at the marriage festival. They see Evanthe coming. Allude to her ill-treatment of the poor lost man,

who was to have been a bridegroom. But they say that he is recovering his mind, and that now is the time for *her*,—*now* she should endeavour to help Medon out of his morbid mental state, which of course they consider to be madness. Enter Evanthe. She is conscious of Medon's distraction of thought and feeling, but does not at all understand the cause, nor has she any womanly instinct of what assistance she could offer. The Chorus exhort her to do something to help the poor troubled man. But Evanthe remains *passive*—from deficiency of intellect—of mental sympathy—of every instinct that might have prompted her to attempt recalling him; and also from gentleness, timidity, and helplessness. She believes she has lost his love, and has no sort of confidence in herself. She is incapable of an effort. (Now this is to

be wished, "because it renders the fate of Evanthe more natural, may serve as a warning to others, and saves Medon from the charge of an utterly diseased morbidity, or monomania, by suggesting that it was just possible he *might* have been reclaimed from his Soul's [Psyche's] too palpable presence and unrest.") The Chorus will lament to see her sink down upon the earth despairingly:—

"Like a crystal from a rock
Broken by electric shock!
Shattered—
Scattered—
All its brightness
Now a whiteness,
Bridesmaids mourn, and Phantoms mock."

End of the Second Act.

The following letter bears no date,

but is full of restlessness as to the names of the characters:—

LIII.

"Anthea—Evanthe—I don't recommend either. Elsewhere, prominently, you read *Earine* rightly, but you are perfectly right besides in eschewing the names of other people's heroines. All its beauty would not fit it for our purpose. Besides, I shan't be brave enough (although working with you) to touch a word hallowed by the atmosphere of that exquisite Sad Shepherd, which proves Ben Jonson a true poet, and no mere scholar, to the critics' faces. . . .

"Aglae—would Aglae do?—or Ægle? After all, my inclination is making towards Medon for the man's name, and to Evanthe (not *adne*) for the woman's. You are perfectly right as to the impertinence of a citizen-chorus. Oh, no—

nothing approaching to an embodiment of the conventionalities would do; but we might hint at them, notwithstanding, if the opportunity comes, and the graceful possibility,—might not we?

"Though perfectly right in abjuring German names, you made me smile a little by protesting against them *because* 'it would be called German mysticism.' Do you really suppose it will be called anything else, in any case? You will see what Mr. Darley (for one) will say to us in the *Athenæum*. Yet I have an interest in the *Athenæum*, for all its sins. They have been as kind to me, I do believe, on different occasions, as their consciences would let them; and the Editor is liberal enough to send me a number every week, on account of a few very occasional contributions of mine, deserving no such gratuity.

"Oh, you will build up the preface excellently well—and, do you know, I am watching your 'paces' altogether very curiously, besides the deeper interest. I want to see how you manage your creations—the creation of your edifices—never having stood near any poetical scaffolding before, except my own. And it appears that you take it very regularly. First, the title-page—then the preface—then [words illegible]—when you begin building, who knows but what you will send me away?

"No—no—the headache is no excuse—I have not frequent headaches—and if, just now, I'm rather more feverish and uncomfortable than usual, the cause is in the dreadful weather,—the snow, and east wind, and not 'Psyche.' These extreme causes do however affect me as little, even less, my physician says, than

might have been feared; and I think steadily, hope steadily, for London at the end of May—so to attain a removal from this place, which has been so eminently fatal to my happiness.

"The only gladness associated with the banishment here has been your offered sympathy and friendship. Otherwise, bitterness has dropped on bitterness like the snows, more than I can tell—and independent of that last most overwhelming affliction of my life [one of her brothers having been drowned almost within sight of her windows], from the edge of the chasm of which I may struggle, but never can escape.

"Ever yours,

"E. B. B.

"I forgot the title. Would not 'Psyche Apocalypté' (η you know) be more cor-

rect, as well perhaps as more pedantic? I don't mind if *you* don't. What is your thought of 'Psyche Agonistes'? I lean to it a little, perhaps."

The next letter bears no date, and no written date is necessary.

LIV.

"Then let it be 'Psyche Apocalypté.' Your reasons are abundantly good.

"Now see how we have been beguiled. The necessary name 'Psyche' drew me towards the propriety of holding a certain Greekness in the other names; and this drew you into fixing upon Greece for a locality. Well, you are right. Only we need not be very local, need we? To tell you the truth, I had never thought about locality—or, at least, about ours being other than some new-world isle, or continent. But let it be Greece.

The Spirits will murmur to our feet the more readily.

"As to the time being *olden*, there are the objections you perceive, and which are insurmountable, and which we need not (happily) try to surmount. Indeed, the endeavour would eclipse, cloud over, the summits of our subject. Let it be, if you please, two hundred years ago—or something less, or something more.

"But now, I am unreasonable or covetous. You say, 'If we have the antique time, we may have a Chorus of Satyrs.' I want the *modern time, and the Satyrs besides*. 'Want' is too strong a word. But I am *inclined* to the Satyrs—I lean to them. There is something 'high fantastic' in them, and deeply contrastive to the Heavenly Spirits. Their 'dark earth' falls with heavy suggestive

noises. Your *woods* [my letter coming from the forest at Loughton] inspired you with the Satyrs.

"Yet, after all, there are certain objections which I glance at reluctantly—such as the difficulty of sustaining the right Satyrical tone, in the universal harmony. If we have them for a Chorus, we must *keep* them for a Chorus. Do think about it; you know so much more of artistic effects than I do. My private instinct is, after all, and certainly, to venture with them."

But it was eventually agreed upon to let the aborigines—designated *Islanders*—stand in the place of Satyrs, so as not to "fall foul" of various spiritual Choruses, Genii, Voices, etc.

Act III.

CONSTRUCTION PROPOSED; AND SOME INTERPOLATIONS BY E. B. B.

Scene I.—Mountains, opening upon green plains beneath. Patches of snow gleam at the foot of the mountains. Enter Medon and (the Child) Leirion. They advance with hurried steps, but Medon knows not where he is going. He is only flying from Psyche—into Nature. [E. B. B. to write this Scene.] They pause for breath. The Child's voice speaks for (interprets the Voice of) Nature. And is echoed by Psyche, invisibly. Medon starts forward again—and stops suddenly at a form half covered with the drifted snow. It is the dead body of his abandoned bride, Evanthe.

The Child falls upon its knees—and buries its head in the cold snow on the

cold bosom of white death. Medon, standing erect with anguish, calls upon Psyche to appear. He will fly no more. Psyche appears. Medon, sustained and strong by the reason of strong woe, is able to look upon and confront Psyche. But thereon, etc. ["*Query*—should this be transplanted to the close of the present Scene? Consider it."—E. B. B. Yes. It had been placed further on.] But Medon is conscious that Evanthe has been the victim of his condition with relation to Psyche, and that every woman would most likely be made a victim under such circumstances. All this, reproaching Psyche—who makes no reply.

Medon is also conscious that the suffering and death of Evanthe has been the means of his recovery, and reconciliation with Psyche. Psyche now replies, and

a very difficult task she will find it, needing to be helped by Chorus of Heavenly Spirits. ["I suggest erasing this, as unnecessary, in case of the other change."—E. B. B.]

SCENE II.—A lofty forest vista, like a Cathedral. In the centre, a new-made grave, surrounded by Islanders. Chorus of Islanders. "The earthliness of death, —the horror of the blind that see only the worm."

"What do we see
More than a dead bird, fallen from her tree!
A dead fish on the shore!
Their brilliant colours gone—
Cold flesh—cold bone—
No more—no more!
The worm awaits us all behind death's door."

The body of Evanthe borne in, attended by Medon and the Child, with Psyche visibly hovering over them. Chorus of

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Heavenly Spirits. A contrast to the poor ignorant Islanders. Dread desolation (notwithstanding) of Psyche, Medon, and the Child, beside the grave, as Evanthe is lowered into it. The Child pleads against Death—and against Death in the world. Psyche and Medon both echo the Child.. Chorus of Heavenly Spirits—declaring and explaining life to be only an intermediate state, and calling upon them for resignation, patience, and faith. ["*Query—life* must be a slip of the pen for *death.*"—E. B. B.—No: it was not.] They listen to this; begin to consider it; but in vain. It all rests upon faith; and what proof or sign that this is well founded? Vision of the Cross. Christ seen crucified. Chorus of Heavenly Spirits. [Christ is love—the Cross, suffering. See that Murillo picture, where the Mother and Father

are giving up their Child to death—the Child also surrendering himself.] "Psyche being softened and beautified, and Medon purified and exalted in the ghastly light of that Divine Agony [*Query*—in the light of that Divine Self-devotion] *love* has its first issue in unity and self-reconcilement. Medon fears Psyche no more, by the force [as you say] of religion." [But *quoad* Evanthe?]

E. B. B. to work it out thus, I think. Medon perceives the change in Psyche: the Child perceives the change in Medon. Chorus of Heavenly Spirits (and perhaps Semi-chorus of Islanders) helping to express the change in Medon. "Medon and Psyche reciprocate in lyrics their sense of reconciliation and unity, crowned chorally by the Heavenly Spirits, and the Song of the beatified Evanthe"

(through whose sufferings the reconciliation had been effected on earth), who is *seen*—at all events by Medon—shining among the Spirits. Finally, "a Great Chorus of reconciliation rising up from the universe to the Reconciler.—*Mem.* Do you agree to this?—otherwise, erase.'

Agreed upon. This Grand Chorus suggesting that, while Medon passes the remainder of his life in a hermitage near the tomb of Evanthe, he will nevertheless find the contemplation full of sweetened regrets by reason of divine hopes. This latter suggestion must be brought close home to the human feelings by one good "touch of nature" for us in our present state. The remainder, all wings. E. B. B. to bring this to The End.

If every drama has certain general

laws of composition, it is equally true that every original and individual drama has some special laws of its own. In the present instance, it was quite clear —as "this was not a love story, but a Psyche one,"—that any attempt at dramatic effect of the usual kind was out of the question. With respect to originality in the sense of being perfectly new, the old saying, that "there is nothing new under the sun," may be applied in the usual wholesale and erroneous manner. But as there are no two things exactly alike in Nature, so in Art the grand transformer of old things into new, is *treatment*. Mrs. Browning's "First Sketch," therefore, of "Psyche Apocalypté" may be fairly said to stand upon its own ground,—or clouds, as the reader may view it.

The last note of the poetess which

we can find on this subject thus concludes:—

LV.

"The 'Tableaux' with your 'Fetches' is in London with papa—all the books I write in being his of right,—and I can't look at Friedrich's speech. I have groped in my memory for it ever since.

"Oh, yes, — of course you must often have *seen* Psyche, 'in visions of the night, when deep *thoughts* fall upon men.' Good-night now, dear Mr. Horne. I must try at least to get to sleep.

"Ever yours,

"E. B. B."

The "Tableaux" refers to a book of miscellaneous poems, tales, and illustrations, edited by Miss Mitford—that year, probably; and the "Fetches" was a tragedy of mine in three scenes,

founded upon a German Legend. In one of the scenes, Friedrich, being alone in some grove, suddenly meets the image of himself—not like a shadowy apparition, but the counterpart of himself. A mono-dialogue, so to speak, ensues, in which his double echoes audibly nearly all that Friedrich says, while taking the same looks and gestures, as though a full-length image in a mirror had walked out of it. Possibly something of this (with a special difference) may have unconsciously haunted the imagination of Miss Barrett —just as the writer of it had himself been haunted by two lines from Shelley, where the Earth says that some thousands of years ago,—

> "The magus Zoroaster—my dead child—
> Met his own image walking in the garden!"

This idea, so horrible if realised even by the imagination, was derived by Shelley, we believe, from some oriental myth of antiquity. These derivations and expositions are not by any means to be regarded as plagiarisms when turned to good account by new *treatment*, which Goethe, like Wordsworth, considered to be "everything," though that was carrying matters rather too far, because if treatment be everything, the subject would be nothing, which cannot be true in Art any more than in Nature. With what originality and truth Mrs. Browning would have treated her subject, has been sufficiently indicated.

How this lyrical drama originated, and how curiously (and, at times, pathetically) it progressed in outline and structure, have been shown; but

why it was never written requires a word or two of explanation. A longer interval than usual occurred, during which Miss Barrett, by consent of her physician, was removed from Torquay to the town house of her family in London. Something was done to the proposed poem, after a while, though not much, I think,—and the fair convalescent was eventually permitted to take an airing, now and then, in an open carriage. Miss Barrett's marriage and departure from England followed. Nothing, from this period, was done with regard to the brain-floating lyric, by the poetess, so far as I know. Friendly notes passed between us, part of Mrs. Browning's being written by her husband, who was a much earlier friend; but no reference was, I believe, made by any of us to the visionary "Psyche."

For my own part, I have never thought of completing it myself, not only because I should have felt that it was like treading upon sacred ground, but also from an artist-feeling and instinct, that a work projected, and very thoughtfully planned out, so as to be wrought in a certain pitch and compass, and in all its details, by combinate minds, could never possess, if accomplished singly, the harmonious and specific character and intentions of its original designers.

V.

Last Letters on General Topics.

V.

LAST LETTERS ON GENERAL TOPICS.

"The Dead Pan"—Miss Barrett's Innovations in Rhyme—Her Double-rhymes—Miss Mitford's conservative Views respecting the Art of Poetry—The Spanish *rima asonante*—How to Reconcile Licence in Rhyme—Versification — Chaucer's rhythmical Variations—Miss Barrett's—The Laureate's—Douglas Jerrold—"An Omnivorous Cousin"—Albany Fonblanque—Original Sketch of "A Drama of Exile"—Sarah Stickney (Mrs. Ellis)—Harriet Martineau—Gossip—Saw. Coleridge — Miss Barrett's Opinion of "The London Doll" — Mrs. Jameson — Leigh Hunt and Ben Jonson—Wordsworth and the Lake Railroad—Carlyle and Mesmerism — Edgar Allan Poe—Miss Barrett contemplates leaving England — "Ballad Romances"—Robert Browning at Pisa—The *Daily News* in Ireland during the Famine—Miss Barrett's Marriage—In the Footsteps of Byron, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt—Florence—Ravenna—At Dante's Tomb—Mr. and Mrs. Browning's Return to England—Departure for Paris.

MISS Barrett, as I have already mentioned, sent me the MS. of

her beautiful poem "The Dead Pan," asking my opinion about it, where it would be best to forward it for publication, or if it should be reserved for a special volume. Of course I admired its poetry and versification, but concerning her view of perfect and imperfect, or *allowable* rhymes, in that, and several of her other productions, I wished, once for all, to object, and give full reasons for it. Strange to say, while various unfortunate men have received the severest censure for trifling licences, my correspondent has but seldom been called to account for her numerous violations of all received principles of English rhyme. But what a compliment it was to her genius, and to the energy and euphony of her verse, that critics were carried away by the stream, and rarely took heed of the sticks and straws that were

passing. The fact also implies a compliment to the critics.

The poem of "The Dead Pan" opens with this verse,—

> "Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
> Can ye listen in your silence?
> Can your mystic voices tell us
> Where ye hide! In floating islands,
> With a wind that evermore
> Keeps you out of sight of shore?
> Pan, Pan is dead."

Having been requested to make my comments on this then unpublished poem, I commenced with a due appreciation of its subject, treatment, and the euphonious flow of the versification; but took objection to many of the rhymes. I did not like "tell us" as a rhyme for "Hellas;" and still less "islands" as a rhyme for "silence." The only excuse for them was the difficulty with regard to the first, and the impossibility of the second, as

there was no perfect rhyme for either in the English language. I suggested that perhaps they were not intended as absolute rhymes at all, but euphonious quantities of the *rima asonante* class? —or was it considered that the rhymes being on the first syllables (*Hell* and *tell*, *si* and *I*) instead of the last, they were to be regarded as fair exchanges? In verse IV., I accepted "rolls on" and "the sun," and "altars" and "welters" on the principle of allowable rhymes, as they were quite as good as "corses" and "forces" where the letters were all right and recognised as true rhymes—which they really are *not*. In verse VI., I objected to "flowing" and "slow in" (the rhyme being only on the first syllable), and in verse XII., to "golden" and "enfolding," for the same reason. In verse XIII., "iron" was very badly

rhymed by "inspiring," being only a rhyme on *ir*. "Panther" and "saunter" in the next verse were bad. In verse XVI., "driven" and "heaving" were not admissible. In verse XIX. "turret" and "chariot," could only be excusable on the equivocal ground that there was no rhyme to either of them in the language, and it might seem generous to wed them for that reason, if not quite justifiable. The words "o'er her" and "horror" —"angels" and "candles,"—"nothing" and "truth in" could only be excused on the same grounds, as there were no rhymes in the language to "nothing" "angels," or "horror." There were several more of these anomalies in the same poem, but I felt I had said quite enough. The following letter will show to what purpose I had preached and prayed.

LVI.

[No date, but apparently written in London.]

"Oh—you are a gnasher of teeth in criticism, I see!—you are a lion and a tiger in one, and in a most carnivorous mood, over and above. My dear Mr. Horne,—do you know, I could not help, in the midst of my horror and Panic terror, smiling outright at the naïveté of your doubt as to whether my rhymes were really meant for rhymes at all? That is the naïveté of a right savage nature—of an Indian playing with a tomahawk, and speculating as to whether the white faces had any feeling in their skulls, *quand même!* Know, then, that my rhymes *are* really meant for rhymes—and that I take them to be actual rhymes—as good rhymes as any used by rhymer and that in no spirit of carelessness or easy writing, or desire to escape diffi-

culties, have I run into them, — but chosen them, selected them, on principle, and with the determinate purpose of doing my best, in and out of this poem, to have them received! What you say of a 'poet's duty,' no one in the world can feel more deeply, in the verity of it, than myself. If I fail ultimately before the public—that is, before the people—for an ephemeral popularity does not appear to me worth trying for—it will not be because I have shrunk from the amount of labour—where labour could do anything. I have *worked* at poetry—it has not been with me reverie, but art. As the physician and lawyer work at their several professions, so have I, and so do I, apply to mine. And this I say, only to put by any charge of carelessness which may rise up to the verge of your lips or thoughts.

"With reference to the double rhy-

ming, it has appeared to me employed with far less variety in our *serious* poetry than our language would admit of genially,—and that the various employment of it would add another string to the lyre of our Terpander.* It has appeared to me that the single rhymes, as usually employed, are scarcely as various as they might be, but that of the double rhymes the observation is still truer. A great deal of attention—far more than it would take to rhyme with conventional accuracy—have I given to the subject of rhymes, and have determined in cold blood to hazard some experiments. At the same time, I should tell you, that scarcely one of the 'Pan' rhymes might not separately

* The masterly use of double, treble, and all sorts of rhymes in *comic* verse—such as in "Hudibras," "Don Juan," Thomas Hood's Poems, and others, is some proof of this argument.

be justified *by the analogy of received rhymes*, although they have not themselves been received. Perhaps (also) there is not so irregular a rhyme throughout the poem of 'Pan' as the 'fel*low*' and 'prunel*la*' of Pope the infallible." [Bad as this may be—and *every* poet of any vigour has abundance of bad, as well as half rhymes—there is a marked difference between that sort of badness and what was pointed out in the "Dead Pan."] "I maintain that my 'islands' and 'silence' is a regular rhyme in comparison. Tennyson's 'tendons' and 'attendance' is more objectionable to my mind than either. You, who are a reader of Spanish poetry, must be aware how soon the ear may be satisfied even by a recurring vowel. I mean to try it. At any rate, there are so few regular double rhymes in the English language that we must either

admit some such trial or eschew the double rhymes generally; and I, for one, am very fond of them, and believe them to have a power not yet drawn out to its length and capable development, in our lyrical poetry especially.

"And now, upon all this—to prove to you that I do not set out on this question with a minority of one—I take the courage and vanity to send to you a note which a poet* whom we both admire, wrote to a friend of mine who lent him the MS. of this very 'Pan.' Mark!—no opinion was asked about the rhymes,—the satisfaction was altogether impulsive—from within. Send me the note back, and never tell anybody that I showed it to you—it would

* Robert Browning, then personally quite unknown to Miss Barrett, although an intimate friend of my own.

appear too vain. Also, I have no right to show it. It was sent to me as likely to please me,—and pleased me so much and naturally on various accounts, and not least from the beauty of the figure used to illustrate my *rhymatology*, that I begged to be allowed to keep it. So, send it back, after reading it confidentially, and pardon me as much as you can of the self-will fostered by it.

"Why shouldn't I (also) say 'very pale,' if I please, for all Mr. Lockhart?* It is very ludicrous, if I may not! I say no more 'verys' than other people —and defy all the critics in the world to prove it. Let them count,

* In the *Quarterly Review*, always so fond of "doing a mischief" where poets and poetry are concerned. He carped and cavilled at several paltry and insignificant matters, such as the frequent use of "very," and sounding the *ed* at the close of certain words.

and see. As to Tennyson, his admirer I am, and his imitator I am *not*, as certainly. Nearly everything in the 'Seraphim' was written before I ever read *one* of his then published volumes: and even the 'instructing the reader to say *ed*,' was done on the pattern of Campbell's 'Theodric,' and not from a later example. In these last volumes of mine I have eschewed all signs whatever of a diæresis pronouncëd or unpronounc'd, so as to give no offence either to myself or other people. But it would be sheer weakness to throw out a word from your vocabulary because somebody is pleased to hang his own foolscap on it. Let it hang there! It is not mine,—and I need not fear the disgrace of it.

"About the 'Pans'" [the too frequent repetitions] "you are right, and

I shall thin them as much as I can. For all your kindness about the poem I am also grateful—'very' grateful, if you will let me be so insolent to Mr. Lockhart.

"You are a bloody critic, nevertheless. I am glad to hear of B——, and agree with you on the point of Patmore.

"Ever and truly yours,

"E. B. B."

It will readily be supposed that upon receiving this letter I did not think it right to persevere with any further comments. It is always best, even with far inferior persons, to avoid a sore subject. The next time, however, that I went on my usual visit to Miss Mitford, at Three Mile Cross, during "the strawberry season," as she called it, I de-

termined to have the matter fully out with her in her garden summer-house, in face of all the geraniums. As she was a lady of the "old school," I was prepared for resistance when I unfolded my views as to the large number of allowable rhymes it seemed important, and indeed necessary, to admit in English lyrical verse. She broke in upon me at the outset, with—

"Oh, pray do not teach or promulgate anything to make the Art of Poetry easier and more open to all-comers. Do everything you can to throw all sorts of difficulties in the way. The world is over-stocked already with minor and minnikin poets, and the crop multiplies every year. One of the very best things I have ever done in my life is to have nipped in the bud half-a-dozen young poetesses. Elegant girls have

come to me declaring they had been visited by poetical impulses, and begging me to read what they had written. A very little was enough, and I assured them that such things had all been done over and over again."

Admitting the good service thus rendered, not only to the young ladies themselves, but to their future husbands and children, I still requested to be heard, and told her of the recent correspondence with Miss Barrett. Then she listened very attentively. Repeating the broad views I entertained as to allowable rhymes, both single and double, I also spoke of the freedom as well as the harmonious variety to be attained by adopting, occasionally, the Spanish *asonante* verse, of which our language was highly capable, though it had so very seldom been used. The "Magico

Prodigioso"* of Calderon, I said, opens with this sort of verse. Miss Mitford agreed that it was "all very well for the Spanish, but thought it would not do in English verse." I then told her of the battle over the "Dead Pan" manuscript, adding my objections to certain rhymes in another of our friend's poems—such as "children," "bewildering," and "stilled in;" —"resounding" and "round him,"— "Heaven" and "unbelieving;" —the fact being, whether the poetess intended it or not, that she was introducing a system of rhyming the first

* Admirably translated by Denis Florence MacCarthy. Southey and Shelley were very harmonious in the use of the short lines of an irregular blank verse; but their rhythmic quantities were as usual, and not like Mr. MacCarthy's. Robert Buchanan, in his "Book of Orm," has adopted this *asonante* verse very successfully.

syllables and leaving the last to a question of euphonious quantity. This I frankly admitted she had effected so well that it did not hurt my ear, and I had protested against it as contrary to all received usage mainly to save her from critical onslaught, especially of those who could not appreciate her genius and her excellency in other respects. In like manner, "Bion" and "undying,"—"Bacchantes" and "grant us,"—"deep in" and "leaping," were all rhymes on only the first or the second syllable. I had, moreover, discovered that when there was *no* rhyme to a word, the lady was inspired, probably without being clearly aware of the fact, to unite another word in the same condition of single life; thus, among other instances,—

"But natural Beauty shuts her bosom
To what the natural feelings tell!
Albeit I sigh'd, the trees would blossom—
Albeit I smiled, the blossoms fell."

Who can say such a euphonious verse hurts the ear?—and who can fail to admire it as poetry? One felt ashamed of having foraged out the fact that there was no rhyme in the English language either to "bosom" or to "blossom." There seemed, indeed, an *et tu Brute* look through the air on the whole of these objections.

Miss Mitford smiled like a summer morning, but shook her head. Fixed associations made her unable to look at the question in any new light. It was the same with Leigh Hunt, and others. The delightful authoress of "Our Village," at this time, was a bright silvery sixty, and her face always shone as

brightly as her hair. I never saw a blooming girl of sixteen with a more fruity hopefulness in her countenance. Yet she clung to the past, not because she would not go on with the stream of things, but because from early training and habits of mind she *could* not. These new theories of rhyme outraged her notions of propriety, and, much as she loved and admired Miss Barrett, she refused to entertain them, and more than hinted reproof to me for my large allowances in such matters. The special examples I had given she met with the following anecdote of another person, which, had it been narrated with any humorous or graphic art of the ordinary sort, would have had a rather ludicrous effect. But Miss Mitford's humour was of a peculiar kind. She never adorned or "embellished," or used any mimetic art

—if she possessed it—but just placed the facts in a simple and prominent position, and slowly and drily delivered them with all the gravity of a chronicle. Strongly objecting to the rhyming licences adopted by the poetess, she thus proceeded to account for, and in part excuse them:—

"Our dear friend, you are aware, never sees anybody but the members of her own family, and one or two others. She has a high opinion of the skill in *reading*, as well as the fine taste, of Mr.——, and she gets him to read her new poems aloud to her, and so tries them upon him (as well as herself), something after the manner of Molière with regard to a far less elegant authority. So Mr. —— stands upon the hearth-rug, and uplifts the MS., and his voice, while our dear friend lies folded up in Indian shawls upon her sofa, with her long black tresses

streaming over her bent-down head, all attention. Now, dear Mr. —— has lost a front tooth—not quite a front one, but a side front one—and this, you see, causes a defective utterance. It does not induce a lisp, or a hissing kind of whistle, as with low people similarly circumstanced, but an amiable indistinctness, a vague softening of syllables into each other,—so that *silance* and *ilance*, would really sound very like one another, —and so would *childrin* and *bewildrin* —*bacchantes* and *grant-es*, don't you see?"

This brings me to the question of Versification—an art quite fixed if we keep to the old classic system of counting feet, or syllables,—but a most eel-like, chameleon-like, chromatic sprite and sylphid, when, boldly diverging from the old, well-known tracks and measurements,

poets take to the spiritual guidance of "airy voices" dictating euphonious accents, pauses, beats of time, wavy lilts and pulsations, often not amenable to any laws except those of musical utterance and emotion. These varied measures, numbers, utterances, when an attempt is made to force them within the confines of special laws, are very apt, in many instances, to find their spirit evaporate, and nothing but a *caput mortuum* remaining in its place. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in forming a settled judgment of these new forms of versification arises from the fact that one good ear will frequently be found to differ from another good ear, with regard to the effect of the same rhythmic music. In short, one can *read it* musically, and another cannot.

Before proceeding with Miss Barrett's

letters on general topics, it will not be irrelevant here to touch upon the question of Versification with reference chiefly to herself, and incidentally to the Laureate and one or two other poets, commencing, of necessity, with Chaucer.

It has been seen that Miss Barrett was a true admirer and student of the Father of English Poetry; but from the influence of early habit, it seems probable that his admirable variations of the euphony of heroic couplets, so as to correct the monotony of their ten-syllable regularity and systematic pauses, were not specially noticed by her, unless, in some cases, as objectionable. The method adopted by Chaucer to obtain variety of harmony in this measure was not, however, so much with respect to the position of pauses and accents in the line, as in the rhythmical embodiment of

an eleventh syllable. He also, on special occasions, breaks up the couplet-system, by ending a poetical paragraph with the first word of the rhyme and a full stop; and then takes it up again, with its proper rhyme in the first line of the next poetical division or paragraph. Two or three examples of the former will make the principle clear:—

"He mote be dedde—a king as well as a page," etc. *The Knight's Tale.*

"I speake of many an hundred year ago," etc. *Wife of Bath's Tale.*

"Thy temple in Delphos wol I barfote seke," etc. *The Frankelin's Tale.*

"At Orliaunce in studie a booke he seie," etc. *Ibid.*

"Where was your pitie, O people mercilesse," etc. *Lamentation of Mary Magdaleine.*

"Her nose directed straight, and even as line," etc. *The Court of Love.*

With these, and similar variations, the poems of Chaucer abound. Read in accordance with the early training of most of us, the reader will exclaim—"It won't come in!" Of course it will not; but the foregoing lines will all be found perfectly harmonious if the words which cause the difficulty are treated like *a turn* in music, so that they come "trippingly" off the tongue. Thus, "as well as," being read *as well's*—"many an," *man'y'n*—"temple in," *templ'in*,—"studie a," *studi'a*,—"pitie, O people," *piti'-o-peopl'*,—"even as," *ev'nas*, etc. These *harmonious* variations * were dropped by

* As a somewhat extreme illustration, I hope the following anecdote will be pardoned. "I notice," said Tennyson (this was long before he became Poet Laureate), "that you have a number of lines in 'Orion' which are not amenable to the usual scanning." "True; but they can all be scanned by the same number of beats of time." "Well, how then do

nearly all the poets during many years after Chaucer.

In *lyrical* verse, and especially in the octo-syllabic measure, the first great in-

you scan—mind, I don't object to it—but how do you scan—

"The long, grey, horizontal wall of the dead-calm sea"?

Now, as this was the only instance of such a line, the engineer fancied he was about to be "hoist with his own petard;" however, he proposed to do it thus—

The | long | grey | hori | zont'l | wall | o' the | dead | calm | sea.

It could easily be put into an Alexandrine line; and, by a different arrangement of the beats of time, the line might even be brought into eight beats :—

Thĕ | lōng | grey | hōri | zōnt'l | wāll-o' the | deād-calm | sēa.

The poet smiled, and apparently accepted the scanning —at any rate the first one. Some of the variations, however, subsequently introduced by Leigh Hunt in his beautiful play of "The Legend of Florence," would have to be tried, like those of Beaumont and Fletcher, by yet more unorthodox principles of harmony.

novator—not precisely the discoverer, but certainly the first great master—was Coleridge. In the "Vision of Pierce Ploughman," in Lidgate's and several other old English and Scottish Ballads, similar musical variations occur, but apparently without intention, and by happy inspiration, though not with the numerous forms of variety introduced by Coleridge. It is said that he once exclaimed with glee—"They all think they are reading eight syllables,—and every now and then they read nine, eleven, and thirteen, without being aware of it."

To come at once to our own time. The peculiar variety which we have been discussing scarcely ever occurs in any of Miss Barrett's earlier poems; but latterly it is to be found in "Aurora Leigh:"

"Or, as noon and night
Had clapped together, and utterly struck out

The intermediate time, undoing themselves
In the act." *Book* III.

"Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get."
Ibid.

"So, happy and unafraid of solitude," etc.—*Ibid.*

"Except in fable and figure: forests chant," etc.
Ibid.

"To a pure white line of flame, more luminous
Because of obliteration, more intense,
The intimate presence carrying in itself."
Book IX.

It is possible that some readers may not have been prepared for this; and still less for the same Chaucerian variation (which many persons may have fancied rough and antiquated, merely from having being trained to a regular syllabic mode of reading) to be found continually, and, of course, gracefully, adopted by the Laureate. Here are three or four illustrations taken quite at random, or quite as much so as usual with such takings:—

"He crept into the shadow: at last he said," etc.
Enoch Arden.

"How merry they are down yonder in the wood," etc.
Ibid.

"Had rioted his life out, and made an end."
Aylmer's Field.

"Strike thro' a finer element than her own?"
Ibid.

"Which rolling o'er the palaces of the proud," etc.
Ibid.

"And oxen from the city and goodly sheep," etc.
Trans. Iliad.

"Sat glorying; many a fire before them blazed."
*Ibid.**

* In the above specimen of a translation from the Iliad—truly a model for all future translators—those who like to have as close a translation of a great poet's words as can be poetically given, will feel surprised at the Laureate's preference for—

"And champing *golden* grain, the horses stood
Hard by their chariots, waiting for *the dawn.*"

instead of his more literal—

"And eating *hoary* grain and *pulse*, the steeds
Stood by their cars, waiting the throned morn."

The first is of the usual sort, and has nothing of the

The "Experiments" (in versification) published by the Laureate at the end of the volume containing "Enoch Arden" and "Aylmer's Field," should be studied by all who take an interest in the progress of English poetry in these respects. "Boädicéa" will be regarded as a success after a second reading, and the poem on "Milton" (in alcaics) at once. Some-

close truth of the description of the dry *mealy* corn, together with the green herbage. Also the word "chariots" instead of "cars," has lost us the grand suggestion of the embattled host looking upward to Eos on her throne, an hour or so afterwards! The very same kind of error is committed by Mr. Gladstone, who prefers giving the common-place "*sharp-tipped* lance," to the original "*copper-tipped*" (see *Cont. Rev.*, Feb., 1874). For what possible reason, of a good kind, should we not have that piece of insight into the arms and armourer's work of the Homeric age? Besides, the very fact of the lances being tipped with copper, will account for many a man's life being saved by the point turning before it had passed through his shield or breast-plates.

how, it seems to be precisely the right kind of measure to adopt with regard to Milton. The hendecasyllabics will require more readings than may be consonant with an admission of success in a metre of Catullus. Still, there are some lines which at least render the cause quite hopeful. Canon Kingsley's "Andromeda" is also a meritorious experiment.

The variations derived from the octosyllabic measure of the old ballads, as brought to perfection by Coleridge, and carried into other perfections, I submit, by Tennyson, and lastly by Swinburne, have now been, more or less, adopted by lyrical poets in general,—by some as conscious students and followers, by others from the almost unconscious influence which leading spirits invariably exercise upon contemporaries of less originality and power. In the variation

upon the octo-syllabic measure we may observe several who have been very successful; more especially among poetesses —from Jean Ingelow, "Sadie," and Miss Rossetti, to the last appearances in the lyrical form, of Jeanie Morrison (Mrs. Campbell, of Ballochyle), and Mrs. Emily Pfeiffer; the two last-named ladies running most gracefully into several melodious measures as by a spontaneous impulse, as if indeed they never had any more thought of the classical terms and technicalities, or of the various laws of the art, than the bird on the bough, who "warbles away," with no idea of such things as crotchets and quavers, *appoggiaturas* and the *nachschlag*—the trochaic or the iambic—the dactylic, anapæstic, or amphibrachic rhythm.

Some indication has already been afforded of the extensive reading of Miss

Barrett in ancient and modern literature, and also that sort of popular reading known as "light literature," or "fiction," which includes not only the outpouring of "seasonable" stuff that often disgraces the period, but works of real depth of thought and inventive genius. A very pregnant comment is made by the lady in our next letter, on the injury of reading more than is good for you, of which she herself was an instance.

LVII. "December 20th, 1843.

"Yes, my dear Mr. Horne,—I cannot refuse what you require, and the more especially as you do not require any systematic review, and as the filling up will rest with you. Nevertheless it is positively true that I am so full of business that papa would laugh at me if he stood near; he who always laughs when-

ever I say 'I am busy,'—laughs like Jove with superior merriment. As if people could possibly be busy with rhymes and butterflies' wings!

"A volume full of MSS. had been ready for more than a year, when suddenly, a short time ago, when I fancied I had no heavier work than to make copy and corrections, I fell upon a fragment of a sort of masque on 'The First Day's Exile from Eden,'—or rather, it fell upon me, and beset me till I would finish it. I cannot tell you even now whether I shall end by printing it,—only if I do print it, it must take a first place in the book,—so that everything has come to a stand until it is finished, and I decide. From the twenty lines I found, I have run into a thousand already —blank verse and lyric intermixtures, and in the dramatic form;—a masque, I

shall call it;—and after all, nobody in the world may ever see it except myself; and I *reserve* my judgment on it. The object is the development of the peculiar anguish of Eve—the fate of woman at its root—and the first step of Humanity into the world-wilderness, driven by the Curse. You know Milton leaves the first parents in Eden; through Eden they 'take their solitary way.' I meet them flying along the great sword-glare! Then, I have Voices of Eden, Spirits in farewell, and lyrical reproaches of Spirits of the Earth and Animal nature. The wanderers find themselves in an earthly zodiac—Shadows of fallen life answering to the starry Shapes of those twelve signs, of which Orion knows—and terrifying the Exiles in the desert, when the first exile-sun has gone down, with a vision of future desolation. At last,

Christ appearing, pacifies and reconciles,—and the Heavenly zodiac shining out, chases the Earthly one underneath, and leaves nothing but the starlight on the ground.

"This is a sketch—not very definite. Besides, there is a Satan, and an angel Gabriel, and some choral angels. Tell me how it strikes you? Is it likely to be aught, or nought? It is better in the doing than in the saying—as I have said it here—but still I doubt. The principal interest is set on Eve; the 'first in the transgression.' 'First in the *transgression*' has been said over and over again, because of the tradition,—but *first* and *deepest in the sorrow*, nobody seems to have said, or, at least, written of, as conceiving.

"All this you have led me unaware into ruffling you with—perhaps. When

I began to write to-day, I did not think to say any more of myself than the earnest thanks with which I overflow, for your great kindness in considering what was best for me, and trying to compass it. In despair of having a proof, I have almost a mind to send you a MS. lyrical poem, which is short enough and happy enough to have had some MS. reputation, because Mr. Kenyon took it into his head that it was 'the best thing I ever wrote, or ever should write' (which isn't true, I hope), and chaperoned it about wherever his kindness could reach. It is a *contra* to Schiller's 'Gods of Greece,' and I make amends for having the worst of the poetry, by having the best of the argument.

"With many thanks I return the proof.*

* Of "A New Spirit of the Age," *see* Section III., *passim*.

It is excellent indeed; and there is a passage about Douglas Jerrold which is full of beauty. You will see marked, at the beginning, where I differ from you on the subject of the employment of wit in *satire*, which department of poetry you certainly seem to overlook. All the great satirists have been 'on virtue's side,' or on what they took for virtue's; and if they sometimes struck the lash out recklessly, it is no argument against their having generally an intention. Satire in its old form of uses, by the way, seems to have died out of our literature—I mean poetical satire. Who would read a 'Dunciad' now? or even a 'golden book' of Juvenal—if Juvenal were here to write another?

"So you think I never read Fonblanque or Sydney Smith—or Junius, perhaps? Mr. Kenyon calls me his

'omnivorous cousin.' I read without principle. I have a sort of unity indeed, but it amalgamates instead of selecting, —do you understand? When I had read the Hebrew Bible, from Genesis to Malachi, right through, and was never stopped by the Chaldee—and the Greek poets, and Plato, right through from end to end—I passed as thoroughly through the flood of all possible and impossible British and foreign novels and romances, with slices of metaphysics laid thick between the sorrows of the multitudinous Celestinas. It is only useful knowledge and the multiplication table I never tried hard at. And now—what now? Is this matter of exultation? Alas, no! Do I boast of my omnivorousness of reading, even apart from the romances? Certainly no!—never, except in joke. It's against my theories and ratiocinations,

which take upon themselves to assert that we *all* generally err by *reading too much*, and out of proportion to what we *think*. I should be wiser, I am persuaded, if I had not read half as much —should have had stronger and better exercised faculties, and should stand higher in my own appreciation. The fact is, that the *ne plus ultra* of intellectual indolence is this reading of books. It comes next to what the Americans call 'whittling.'

"By the way, did you receive Mr. Cornelius Mathews's book? and 'what is your thought like?'

"Yes, the essay in this proof is excellent. Still, it does strike me that you raise Douglas Jerrold a little above his natural level, and depreciate Fonblanque and Sydney Smith a little below theirs, by classing the three together—him with

them, I mean. And then,—is Fonblanque praised enough for the most brilliant writer in Europe?—for his power both argumentative and epigrammatic?—and especially for his unequalled adroitness in literary allusion and quotation? His wit covers as many sins as his charity might: and if I were Lord Brougham, I believe that I should think so still.

"Could it be possible to strengthen an expression or two in respect to Fonblanque?—or impossible?—or undesirable?

"Then, I doubt, notwithstanding my carpings at the Stricklands and Stickneys, whether you should not put their names into your book after all. They have a certain popularity—more popularity perhaps than if they had genius,—and both of them deserve praise in their

departments. Besides, Agnes Strickland stands on the high ground of history, to claim your attention; and Sarah Stickney is the actual Mrs. Ellis (or I am mistaken) who gives twelve editions of instructions to the 'Women,' 'Wives,' 'Daughters' (and 'Grandmothers' says *Punch*), of our common England. Now, albeit you may opine, in your secret soul, that the race of Mrs. Ellis's disciples runs the risk of being model-women of the most abominable virtue, you can't help, I think, in the meantime, without exposing your work to a charge of imperfection, making mention of a voluminous female writer who has carried books through a dozen or more editions. Judge if you can help it. Also, it seems to me that you should mention Miss Lawrence, and certainly Miss Costello, who is a highly accomplished woman,

and full of grace and sense of beauty. Mrs. Ellis is a poetess, by courtesy—are you aware? And looking over a book-catalogue this morning, I saw Agnes Strickland's name attached to a 'Demetrius, and other Poems,' whereof I never heard before.

"Have you a portrait of Mrs. Somerville? I hope so.

"So, this Reverend Robert Montgomery is to have stripes instead of honour. Well, the false gods should be put down.

"I send the paper on Milnes.

"Truly yours,

"E. B. B.

"Mrs. Orme says, 'If you write soon to Mr. Horne, tell him that I am better, and that I have the guitar.'"

The lady referred to was a particular friend of Miss Barrett's, who resided

within a few doors of Leigh Hunt's house at Kensington. The guitar had been sent to her first, to be passed on to Leigh Hunt, as he had often expressed a great wish to put words to a certain minuet, composed by Sor, in which a peculiar blending of elegance and melancholy had much impressed him. But although it was played to him every evening, the next time I was on a visit in that neighbourhood, he could never satisfy himself with the words he wanted. His musical sensibilities were evidently without any definite ideas in this case, and he had too true a feeling and taste to substitute mere euphonious words for his more delicate apprehensions. He had intended them, when composed, for Sir Percy Shelley (son of the poet), at that time often visiting Leigh Hunt at Kensington.

LVIII. "50, WIMPOLE STREET,
"Nov. 7th, 1844.

"As you remind me, Miss Martineau is a great landmark to show how far a recovery can go. She can walk five miles a day now with ease, and is well, she says—not comparatively well, but well in the strict sense. You may say so in the third edition of your 'Spirit of the Age.' Moreover, she has an apocalyptic housemaid (save the mark!) who, being *clairvoyante*, prophesies concerning the anatomical structure of herself and others, and declares 'awful spiritual dicta' concerning the soul and the mind and their future destination; discriminating (says Miss Martineau) 'between what she hears at church and what is true.' A lively child, whom I once had pastime with, used to rhyme, singing to herself—

'What will this world come to?
A little bit of glue!'

And really I am inclined to take up the verse when I hear of the loosening of the soul to the end of its tether while it runs into the spiritual world and returns again to this. I am credulous and superstitious, naturally, and find no difficulty in the *wonder;* only precisely because I believe it, I would not subject myself to this mystery at the will of another, and this induction into things unseen. My blood runs the wrong way to think of it. Is it lawful—or, if lawful, expedient? Do you believe a word of it, or are you sceptical like papa? . . . . . I have little inclination to depreciate the critics, who have treated me very kindly. Ainsworth, the *Metropolitan*, the *New Monthly*, *Tait*, and *Blackwood* (last and greatest beyond any comparing) have all,

according to their measure, been kind and generous to me. For the newspapers, besides those I mentioned, the *Examiner* sounded a clarion for me. I am well pleased altogether, and I have had a long and most kind letter from Harriet Martineau in approbation, and from Mrs. Jameson, and a kind note from Mr. Landor and others. Now I do beseech you, by whatever regard you may feel for me (in which I am ambitious to believe), to write to me a kind letter too—. that is, a *sincere* letter. Do not fancy yourself obliged to write compliments to me—surely our friendship has outgrown such mere green wood. I promise not to enact the Archbishop of Granada if you speak the truth to me. That the books I send you are full of faults, I know. Will you tell me what the chief faults appear to you to be? A remark

you once cursorily made to me about deepening my shadows, I hope you will see that I have borne in mind—though more may be yet done in that way. If I did not alter everything you suggested in 'Pan,' I could give you reasons, some literary and some otherwise, which you would not take to be inadequate. Your criticisms will not be thrown away upon me, if you think me worthy of an opinion apart from all conventionalities of a vain courtesy and gallantry, but will be useful long after the pleasure of praise has ceased to touch me. The 'Drama of Exile,' the longest poem, has been thrown aside by nearly all the official critics as inferior to the rest — and perhaps as a whole it is unsuccessful.

"'Lady Geraldine's Courtship' appears to be the popular favourite. Oh for life and strength to do something better and

worthier than any of them—I feel as if I could do it.

"Tell me if you are writing. Miss Mitford had the great kindness to come to see me three or four days ago for a few hours, and we had all the gossip possible to women, upon various subjects, you among them. She is looking well, and full of her old vivacity, so charming, because no one knows distinctly whether it comes from the head or heart. She did not tell me that she had heard from you,—and I didn't tell her that I had heard from you. We couldn't, you know. We 'reasoned high' as to whether you might not have fallen low—completing your descent down the Drachenfels, and explaining your silence."

The next letter has no date, but internal evidence shows that it was written

some time in 1844, and has reference to the portraits in "A New Spirit of the Age." It is valuable as displaying the opinion of one learned lady of another learned lady of her own day, viz., Sara Coleridge.

LIX.

"Thank you, my dear Mr. Horne, you are kinder than kind. I am delighted with the engravings, and shall have the poets (at least Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Talfourd) framed, and hung up in this room. I only wish the editor had been one of them.

"No more superfluous words, and thank you again.

"E. B. B.

"*Wednesday.* By the way, or rather out of the way, I hope I did not seem to infer any disrespect to Sara Coleridge in a general remark made in my letter

yesterday. I forgot her while I wrote it. She is not a poet—she does not pretend to the faculty—but she has a lively fancy, as she has expressed it in her prose fairy-tale, and possesses perhaps more learning, in the strict sense, than any female writer of the day. A theological essay, in appendix to the late edition of her father's philosophical works, is remarkable for its erudition, and its calm and candid ratiocination. A little wire-drawn, but of sturdy metal. I have a high respect for Mrs. Coleridge!

"And you will please to recollect, Mr. Horne, that when I talk of women, I do not speak of them (as many men do, and as perhaps you yourself are somewhat inclined to do) according to a separate, peculiar, and womanly standard, but according to the common standard of human nature.

"There is a postscript scarcely proportionate to the antescript!"

The following fragment of a letter written about this time has special reference to one of my books for children, either "The London Doll,"* or "The Good-natured Bear" (both recently republished by Strahan).

LX.

". . . . I liked your child's book, and recognised in it, every here and there, some divine faint starlight from 'Orion.' But there is one great omission. There is a sense of God in the mind of every child, and to this you do not respond. Doctrinal instruction is out of the question; but the sense of God, that instinctive aspiration of the child's mind, should not be met with silence and vacancy in

* See Section III Vol. i., pp. 238-9.

the mind of the teacher. Now there is my sermon and criticism for you, both in one, if you will accept them so."

Having only occasionally had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Jameson, I should have felt diffident in venturing to bring her upon the scene. Fortunately this can be done by a better hand, Mrs. Jameson having visited Miss Barrett during her period of seclusion. The date of the following letter appears to be December 3, 1844 :—

LXI.

"Not a sound—not a sign! . . . . Tell me, for I do long to hear what is called now-a-days the 'real mesmeric truth.' Ὀτοτοτοῖ—in English we have nothing complaining enough, though we are said, here in England, to have the spirit of grumbling. . . .

"Since I wrote last I have seen Miss Mitford again, and I have lately received her promise of an early visit. That is, she will come as she did before, for what poor 'L. E. L.' used to call the 'superfelicity of talking,' and stay with me from noon-tide to seven o'clock p.m. Also I have seen Mrs. Jameson, . . . and she overcame at last by sending a note to me from the next house—51, Wimpole Street. Do you know her? She did not exactly reflect my idea of Mrs. Jameson. And yet it would be both untrue and ungrateful to tell you that she disappointed me. In fact she agreeably surprised me in one respect, for I had been told that she was *pedantic*, and I found her as unassuming as a woman need be —both unassuming and natural. The tone of her conversation, however, is rather analytical and critical than spon-

taneous and impulsive, and for this reason she appears to me a less charming companion than our friend of Three Mile Cross, who 'wears her heart upon her sleeve,' and shakes out its perfumes at every moment. She—Mrs. Jameson—is keen and calm, and reflective. She has a very light complexion—pale, lucid eyes—thin colourless lips, fit for incisive meanings—a nose and chin projective without breadth. She was here nearly an hour, and though on a first visit, I could perceive that a vague thought or expression she would not permit to pass either from my lips or her own. Yet nothing could be greater than her kindness to me, and I already think of her as of a friend.

"Miss Martineau is astounding the world with mesmeric statements through the *medium* of the *Athenæum*—and yet,

it happens, so that I believe few converts will be made by her. The medical men have taken up her glove brutally—as dogs might do—dogs, exclusive of my Flush, who is a gentleman.

"Well, have you received my poems? In the 'Pan' you will observe that I accepted certain of your suggestions, and neglected others — neglected some because I did not agree with you, and some because I could not follow my own wishes. In fact, or rather by fantasy, that poem seemed to me to belong to Mr. Kenyon. In various manners, past describing, he has lavished so much interest and kindness on it, and on me through it, that he seemed to me to have all the rights of adoption. He wanted various things altered, which I altered for the most part. Here and there, however, I was obliged to resist—though not without

pain. And when I proposed having the Greek names (on which point I do altogether in my inward soul agree with you), he spurned the idea of turning Jove into Zeus, and I had not the courage to stand by my arms.

". . . The volumes are succeeding, past any expectation or hope of mine. *Blackwood's* high help was much, and *Tait's* not unavailing. Then I continue to have letters of the kindest, from unknown readers. I had a letter yesterday from the remote region of Gutter Lane, beginning, 'I thank thee!' . . . The American publisher has printed fifteen hundred copies. If I am a means of ultimate loss to him, I shall sit in sackcloth. . . .

"I have not heard a word from Leigh Hunt. . . . I am grateful enough to him as it is, having, in addition to all former

causes of gratitude, the present delight of reading his new critical work upon poetry. The most delightful and genial of poetical critics he is assuredly. Not that I always agree with him. I have it in my head, for instance, that he knows Ben Jonson somewhat superficially,—and underrates his lyrics immensely* and accepts the popular prejudice about his 'jealousy,' etc., even blindly. Is there a poet of England, new or old, who has written so much praise of his contemporaries as Ben Jonson? I know not. Does that fact prove jealousy in him? I infer not. Then, Beaumont and Fletcher he is niggardly in selections from, and for a reason I do not admit, for he says that it is impossible to quote a passage longer

* The above was written before Leigh Hunt had published all his remarks on Ben Jonson.

than a very short one without falling upon matter of offence. Respectfully, I abjure the reasonableness of such a reason. Then, again, I seriously am of opinion that even if he rejects, . . . he might, out of the broad sympathy of a poet's heart, have had patience with Milton's divinity, as another form of mythology. There may be sectarianism in the very cutting off of sectarianism. I am sorry (very) for some things said, and some things left unsaid, in the paper on Milton—for instance, the omission of one of the very noblest odes in the English language (that on the Nativity), because—it is not on the birth of Bacchus! Objections like these apart, the book is, however, a beautiful book, and will be a companion to me for the rest of my life. My brother George gave it to me as the most acceptable gift in the

world. Talking of books of poetry, tell me the name of the poem you are writing. My American friends ask about your 'Gregory,' 'Cosmo,' and 'Marlowe,' and want to naturalise them a little more.

"Mr. Tennyson is quite well again, I understand. Wordsworth is in a fever about the railroad which people are going to drive through the middle of the Lake School. So excited was he, that his wife persuaded him to go from home for a time, and *compose* his mind. He went, like an obedient husband—but he has come back again with ten fevers instead of one—and the time of his absence he spent in canvassing for Members of Parliament who would not say 'aye' to it. Fifty have promised, he says, to protect him—although Monckton Milnes, having caught corruption from the Utilitarians, dares to oppose the master-poet front to

front, and sonnet to sonnet. Mr. Browning has not returned to England yet.

"And then I hear that Carlyle won't believe in mesmerism, and calls Harriet Martineau *mad*. 'The madness showed itself first in the refusal of the pension—next, in the resolution that, the universe being desirous of reading her letters, the universe should be disappointed—and thirdly, in this creed of mesmerism.' I wish (if he ever did use such words) somebody would tell him that the first manifestation, at least, was of a noble phrenzy, which in these latter days is not too likely to prove contagious. For my own part, I am not afraid to say that I almost believe in mesmerism, and quite believe in Harriet Martineau.

"May God bless you, my dear friend. Take care of yourself, and be very happy.

"E. B. BARRETT."

LXII. "50, WIMPOLE STREET,

"May 12th, 1845.

. . . . . .

"Your friend, Mr. Poe, is a speaker of strong words 'in both kinds.' But I hope you will assure him from me that I am grateful for his reviews, and in no complaining humour at all. As to the 'Raven' tell me what you shall say about it! There is certainly a power—but it does not appear to me the natural expression of a sane intellect in whatever mood; and I think that this should be specified in the title of the poem. There is a fantasticalness about the 'sir or madam,' and things of the sort, which is ludicrous, unless there is a specified insanity to justify the straws. Probably he—the author—intended it to be read in the poem, and he ought to have intended it. The rhythm acts excellently

upon the imagination, and the 'nevermore' has a solemn chime with it. Don't get me into a scrape. The 'pokerishness' (just gods! what Mohawk English!) might be found fatal, peradventure. Besides,—just because I have been criticised, I would not criticise. And I am of opinion that there is an uncommon force and effect in the poem.

"I am delighted at the prospect of 'Orion's' being republished in New York. I love the Americans, and think they deserve your 'Orion.' A noble and cordial people, for all their 'pokerishness'—save the mark! But Mr. Poe seems to me in a great mist on the subject of metre. You yourself have skipped all the philosophy of the subject in your excellent treatise on 'Chaucer Modernized,' and you shut your ears when I

tried to dun you about it one day. But Chaucer wrote on precisely the same principles (eternal principles) as the Greek poets did, I believe unalterably; and you, who are a musician, ought to have sung it out loud in the ears of the public. There is no 'pedantic verbiage' in Longinus. But Mr. Poe, who attributes the 'Œdipus Colonœus' to Æschylus (*vide* review on me), sits somewhat loosely, probably, on his classics.

"Yours truly ever,

"E. B. B."

LXIII. "50, WIMPOLE STREET,

"September 29th, 1845.

"Do let me hear from you, dear Mr. Horne, and quickly, as my foot is in the air—balanced on the probability of a departure from England,—for some land of the sun yet in the clouds—Italy

perhaps, Madeira possibly; there to finish my recovery, or rather to prevent my yearly *rechute* in the wintry cold—so let me hear from you quickly. It seems long since I have heard from you—and I listen in vain for your ballad book, and for other pleasant sounds of you which always must be three times welcome to me. I am likely to go very soon if at all—the uncertainty is dominant,—and I have been long and continue still in great vexation and perplexity from this doubtfulness. . . . . If I go to Italy it will be by sea, and high authorities among the doctors promise me an absolute restoration in consequence of it—and I myself have great courage and hope when I do not look *beyond myself*. I have been drinking life at the sun all this summer (and *that* is why the foun-

tains of it have seemed so dry to you and the rest of the world), but, though in improved health and courage, I am sometimes a very Jacques for melancholy and go moralising into a thousand similes half the uses of the day. Mr. Mathews has sent me his 'Abel.' Do you know any one who will review it with a justice leaning to mercy's side? I wish I could do something for it, as the writer is so anxious for the fate of it here in England, and has been kind to me. Miss Mitford proposed kindly coming to see me before I left England, but I have no spirits just now to make farewells of. When I set up my Republic against Plato's, nobody shall say good-bye in it except the 'good haters' one to another.

"Now I do hope to hear of your prosperity as soon as possible. Is your

American edition of 'Orion' out, as Mr. Poe announced it?

"Always believe me, dear Mr. Horne,

"Faithfully and gratefully yours,

"E. B. B."

LXIV.

"Monday [no other date—1846].

"I thank you, my dear Mr. Horne, for your kindness in the gift of your 'Ballad Romances,' and for all the pleasure I have had in the work. 'The Monk of Swineshead Abbey,' and the 'Three Knights,' and the unforgotten 'Delora' strike different keys, and are all three deep with various music. The 'Monk' is very vigorous and significant, and in the 'Three Knights' I like your satyr who swears by his horn, and your giant who wakes 'like a giant from his slumbers' and swears like the same. What I like least in the volume—

now, you know, I always persist in telling the truth—is the Elf-story, though I enjoy the beginning and the end just as you would have me. But—but—I eschew Grandmamma Guy and her night-cap and 'the small boy'—who is not 'the small boy'—entirely, *for machinery;* it is no right machinery for the elves, in my mind, and I say what I think. The familiar and the supernatural are brought too close together, perhaps—'shoetye' and 'blue sky,' as you say in your Apocrypha. Now look at Drayton's tale of 'The Fairies'—how pure and musical that is! I hold that a Grandmamma Guy would never have sight of a real elf, let her put on her spectacles ever so! The opening of the poem has great beauty, and so has the close of it, as I said and must say again. And that surprises me that you should allow

yourself to wander from the keynote after the fashion you choose.

"But the monks—but the knights—oh, we must all thank you for these things just as I do. And Ben Capstan has vigour and meaning too, only that I object a little to his Doric, which is not sweet Doric, and take the liberty of thinking it unlawful. Scotch is lawful. But I should object to *Zummerzetshire!* I, for one. And I should object to Cockneyism *a fortiori*. Wrong, perhaps! But I tell you the truth.

"And so you go to Ireland. Do you go directly, and is it a prospect which pleases you? I wish you the most satisfying of successes in the dirt of politics, and hands still white for the Muses.

"May God bless you, for this year and other years. Success to this book especially.

"If you could see what a tangle my thoughts are in, you would smile.

"Ever most truly and gratefully your friend,

"ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

"What a beautiful image *that* is in illustration of the transiency of life,—

> 'The shadow of the windmill sails
> Across yon slope of sunny green.'

It strikes me much."

LXV. "PISA, Dec. 4.

"DEAR HORNE,—Your good, kind, loyal letter gave me all the pleasure you meant it should. I mean to 'answer' it ere long, but as my wife wants to send a letter by an enclosure I am now getting ready for this evening. I could not help shaking your hand, through the long interval of Italian air, and saying, if only in a line, that I know your friendliness

and honour your genius as much as ever. One of these days we shall meet again, never fear—and then you shall see my wife, your old friend, and hear from her what I have often heard from her, and what, perhaps, the note tells you. She has long been wanting to send it. She is getting better every day,—stronger, better wonderfully, and beyond all our hopes. It is pleasant living here. Why do you not come and try? This street we live in terminates with the Palace in which your Cosmo killed his son.

"Ever yours faithfully, as of old,

"R. BROWNING."

LXVI.

"PISA, COLLEGIO FERDINANDO, Dec. 4th.

"At last you see, my dear Mr. Horne, I am writing to you, and if I could but, while I write, with a breath dispel all my misdeeds against you, I should be glad,

believe me. But the truth has made itself apparent to you, I hope—that my silence and backwardness of late have been all parts of anything but an unkind feeling to you—of a difficult position of my own, indeed, which it was scarcely possible to move in without the risk of falling from it. If I had seen you, for instance, in the course of the last two years, you would have seen what I wished you not to see—not through distrust of *you*, as you may suppose. I have been tied and bound—I could not help myself. Then, in not answering your last Dublin note,* I knew I should be away when

* [Mr. Horne was at this time the special Irish "Commissioner" for the *Daily News*, then edited by Charles Dickens. For the purpose of establishing a connection in the "sister isle," Mr. Horne had an office in Dublin, unlimited credit on the resources of the paper, a "sub-editor" and a staff of reporters. This was during the terrible famine, and Mr. Horne

you returned, and I could not say so, and I did not choose to leave our Chaucer [?] and send you a 'double' letter for another end than the postage. You had deserved better from me, and I had it in my head to write to you to another effect just before my marriage, which I did not do, precisely because the head whirled and whirled. Our plans were made up at the last in the utmost haste and agitation—precipitated beyond all intention. Now you will forgive me, and try to think of me as I have never ceased to be, as your friend in the truest sense. I have a good deal surprised you, I am certain, though you have written to my husband so very

travelled to Limerick along the south-west coast of Clare into Galway and the wilds of Connemara for the purpose of sending reports of the actual state of things witnessed by himself. Mr. Dickens's brilliant but brief connection with the *Daily News* is well known.—S. R. T. M.]

kind a note, for which we both gratefully thank you; and perhaps it has struck you that a woman might act more generously than to repay a generous attachment with such a questionable gift and possible burthen as that of uncertain health and broken spirits; to which I can only say that I have been overcome in generosity as in all else, though not without a long struggle in this specific case; also there was the experience that all my maladies came from without, and the hope that if unprovoked by English winters, they would cease to come at all. The mildness of the last exceptional winter had left me a different creature, and the physicians helped me to hope everything from Italy. So you see how it all ended. I have been gaining strength every week since we left England; and Mrs. Jameson, who met us in Paris and

travelled to Pisa with us, called me at the end of six weeks, notwithstanding all the emotion and fatigue, 'rather transformed than improved.' She has now gone to Florence and we are left to ourselves in a house built by Vasari, and within sight of the Leaning Tower and the Duomo, to enjoy a most absolute seclusion and plan the work fit for it. I am very happy and very well. Pisa was recommended to me for its climate, and, besides, is a good beginning of Italy, both for language and art. We have heard a mass (a musical mass for the dead) in the Campo Santo, and achieved a due pilgrimage to the Lanfranchi Palace to walk in the footsteps of Byron and Shelley, and also of Leigh Hunt. He inhabited, I think, the ground-floor. Then, a statue of your Cosmo looks down from one of the great piazzas we often

pass through, on purpose to remind us of you. This city is very beautiful and full of repose—'asleep in the sun,'—as Dickens said for the best word of his 'Letters from Italy.' What are you doing and where going? Shall we hear? Whenever there shall be means of seeing you again, be sure that I shall not talk of *hearing* rather—except the guitar should tempt!

"Think of me, dear Mr. Horne, as always, most truly and gratefully your friend,

"ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING."

LXVII. [Same date.]

"We were reading your letter, my dear Mr. Horne, together, on our little terrace—walking up and down and reading it—I mean the letter to Robert—and then, at the end, suddenly turning,

lo, just at the edge of the stones, just between the balustrades, and already fluttering in a breath of wind and about to fly away over San Felice's church, we caught a glimpse of the feather of a note to E. B. B. How near we were to the loss of it, to be sure! And it would have been a great loss, notwithstanding all that she seems to deserve ill of you, scarce deserved by a friend of yours who holds you in unalterable regard. But could it indeed be true that we did not answer your letter before? Now, surely we did answer it. I can't make up my mind to plead guilty to such a charge of negligence, and I seem to remember the very paper I wrote upon, my husband first and then I. Think again whether you did not get such a letter?—Well!—it does not much matter now. What I want *now* to speak

of is the deep sympathy with which we both listen to all you tell us of yourself—so characteristic, and not the less admirable for *that!* May I not say so, my dear friend? If we were in England perhaps we should have to make out life with mustard and cress, too—the only vegetable I was ever distinguished for the cultivation of! Cabbages and potatoes grew so much too slowly for me that they were always dug up to make place for something more active. Here we live for nothing, or next to nothing, and have great rooms, and tables and chairs thrown in,—and although hearing occasionally that Florence is to be sacked on such a day, and our Grand Duke deposed on such another, I have learnt to endure meekly all such expectations, and to hold myself as safe as you in your garden, through them all. One

thing is certain—that the Italians won't spoil their best surtouts by venturing out in a shower of rain through whatever burst of revolutionary ardour, nor will they forget to take their ices through loading of their guns. So I am as brave —as brave—as the Pope isn't. My husband bids me remember to tell you how he rushed away from Florence in June in order to be cooler, and went to *Ancona*, prudent people that we were, leaping right into the cauldron. The heat was just the fiercest fire of your imagination, and I *seethe* to think of it at this distance. But we saw the whole coast, from Ravenna to Loretto, and had wonderful visions of beauty and glory in passing and repassing the Apennines. At Ravenna we stood one morning at four, at Dante's tomb, with its pathetic inscription, and seldom has any such

sight so moved me. Ravenna is a dreary, marshy place, with a dead weight of melancholy air fading the faces of its inhabitants; and its pine forest stands off too far to redeem it any wise. That Lord Byron should have praised it, is just a token of the spells of the Guiccioli —who has revolutionised, you see—like the rest of the world—into a Mme. de Boissy. Some one told us the other day that she was 'still very beautiful.' How I long to see your 'Judas,' with the appended poems. The subject was a daring one, and admissive of the finest things. All I complain of at Florence is the difficulty of getting sight of new books, which I, who have been used to a new 'sea-serpent' every morning, in the shape of a French romance, care still more for than my husband does. Old books we can arrive at, and besides, our

own are coming over the sea. Oh, but we haven't given up England altogether —we talk of spending summers there, and have a scheme of seeing you all next year, if circumstances should permit of it. Thank you in the meantime for intending to write to us, and tell us everything about books and men. For you do intend it, don't you? I thank you beforehand to make sure of it. In particular, I want you to tell us of yourself. So used am I to be grateful to you that it scarcely can be a strange thing to read those most kind words in which you promise a welcome to my husband's poems,—only you will believe that kindness in that shape must touch me nearest. God bless you, dear friend. I am as ever, and most truly yours,

"E. B. B.

"Dear Miss Mitford has been much

less well than usual, I do fear. But it does not appear to be a dangerous indisposition. You, who take courage always, will keep it. The day for thinkers and writers, and only for those, is breaking fast."

LXVIII. "LONDON, September 24th [1851].

"MY DEAR MR. HORNE,—I am writing this for Robert as well as for myself. We leave England for Paris to-morrow, and as you made no sign we concluded that you were still at Broadstairs,* and did not pay you our visit. I am vexed to have to go without seeing you again. We send by the Parcels Delivery Company to your address, dear friend, the new editions of our works, and the last new poems. We wish you to have them for friendship's sake, and remain in all

* With Dickens.

affectionateness of thoughts and wishes, your faithful,

"ROBERT AND ELIZABETH
"BARRETT BROWNING.

"The above are literally my last words written in England, I think. You will write to us, won't you, sometimes? Send any letter to New Cross, till we have a fixed address in Paris."

END OF MRS. BROWNING'S LETTERS.

VI.

Recollections of Contemporaries:

THE GUILD OF LITERATURE AND ART:

1.—NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM.

2.—MR. NIGHTINGALE'S DIARY.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

CHARLES DICKENS.

W. M. THACKERAY.

LEIGH HUNT.

VI.

THE GUILD OF LITERATURE AND ART.

1.—Not so Bad as we Seem.

THE Guild of Literature and Art, which commenced with the highest prospects of success, was founded (though the idea had been originated years before by the present writer*) by Lytton Bulwer and Charles Dickens. The former proposed to give land upon one of his estates for the erection of a college, and to write a comedy, to be acted with a view to raising a preliminary fund in aid of the object; and in the first instances the

* [In Mr. Horne's book, "An Exposition of the False Medium and Barriers Excluding Men of Genius from the Public" (pp. 287—299), published by Effingham Wilson in 1833.—S. R. T. M.]

performers were to be celebrated authors and artists. All this was undertaken by Dickens, and the following friends. The artists who were engaged on Bulwer's comedy of "Not so Bad as we Seem, or Many Sides to a Character," were Daniel Maclise, R.A., Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., John Leech, Augustus Egg, R.A: Mr. Topham, Mr. Frank Stone, and Mr. Tenniel. The authors were Charles Dickens, Mark Lemon, Dudley Costello, Robert Bell, Douglas Jerrold, Charles Knight, John Forster (all gone!), and myself. Wilkie Collins and two or three others were engaged in subsequent performances; but the above list comprises, I think, all who appeared when the play was represented at Devonshire House. The stage architect and machinist was Sir Joseph Paxton; and to his name among the "past and gone" we have to

add that of our kind and munificent patron, the late Duke of Devonshire.

The Duke gave us the use of his large picture gallery, to be fitted up with seats for the audience; and his library adjoining for the erection of the theatre. The latter room being larger than required for the stage and its scenery, the back portion of it was screened off for a "green room." Sir Joseph Paxton was most careful in the erection of the theatre and seats. There was a special box for the Queen. None of the valuable paintings in the picture gallery (arranged for the auditorium) were removed, but all were faced with planks, and covered with crimson velvet draperies; not a nail was allowed to be hammered into the floor or walls, the lateral supports being by the pressure from end to end, of padded beams; and the uprights, or stanchions,

were fitted with iron feet, firmly fixed to the floor by copper screws. The lamps and their oil were well considered, so that the smoke should not be offensive or injurious—even the oil being slightly scented—and there was a profusion of wax candles. Sir Joseph Paxton also arranged the ventilation in the most skilful manner; and with some assistance from a theatrical machinist, he put up all the scenes, curtains, and flies. Dickens was unanimously chosen general manager, and Mark Lemon stage manager. We had a professional gentleman for prompter, as none of the amateurs could be entrusted with so technical, ticklish, and momentous a duty.

Never in the world of theatres was a better manager than Charles Dickens. Without, of course, questioning the superiority of Goethe (in the Weimar theatre)

as a manager in all matters of high-class dramatic literature, one cannot think he could have been so excellent in all general requirements, stage effects, and practical details. Equally assiduous and unwearying as Dickens, surely very few men ever were, or could possibly be. He appeared almost ubiquitous and sleepless. We had, I think, thirteen rehearsals, six or seven even after everybody knew his part.

Nothing could surpass the princely munificence of the Duke throughout, unless, indeed, it were his delicate consideration for the feelings of all engaged in the matter. The gates of Devonshire House were opened to our hackneys and cabriolets with all the usual ceremonies of porters and footmen. A cold collation comprising every delicacy in and out of season, with the choicest wines, was always served for the "company," behind

whose chairs the Duke's footmen stood in full livery; and at most of those twelve or thirteen luxurious *déjeûners à la fourchette*, his Grace sat down with us, apologising for the state of his health, which limited him to a very spare indulgence.

The principal scenes were painted by Clarkson Stanfield; others were the work of Maclise; besides which, Egg, as well as Topham and Tenniel, gave frequent assistance, and were all continually on the stage during the touching up and arrangement of the scenery.

Planché was consulted about the costumes; and it was agreed that the wigs and "make-up" of faces should be as characteristic as possible. One military "character," not considering himself sufficiently tall for the part, had a pair of thigh boots made with cork heels four inches high.

Several amusing incidents occurred in

the course of the rehearsals. The first was during the preparation of the scenic arrangements, some alteration in which was required. Sir Joseph Paxton gave his directions, and went away for a time. The hour for rehearsal had not yet come, and we were conning our parts in the green-room. Meanwhile, a tall elderly gentleman, very plainly dressed in a suit of what looked like rather rusty black, had got upon the stage, and was lurking among the wings, now in one place, now in another, with an amiable smile upon his countenance, denoting the interest he took in the proceedings. The heavy roller of a scene was being hoisted, and the tall gentleman in black became confused as to his whereabouts. "Now, sir!" exclaimed a voice, "keep out of the way, if you don't want to get your back broke!" The elderly gentleman

apologised with a deprecating bow, and immediately retired. "Who was that?" somebody inquired: but nobody on the stage at that moment knew. It was the Duke! This direful *contretemps* was speedily put to rights by the tact of our manager, and was the source of much amusement to the amiable nobleman, who warmly and humorously expressed his thanks for the timely warning.

Another incident may serve as material for some curious speculations as to the force of imagination, and the sympathy between our visual and olfactory organs. *Colonel Flint*,* of the Guards, a bully and duellist, described in the *dramatis personæ* as a "fire-eater," was to stand with his back to the red glowing chimney-piece in "Will's Coffee House." The period is that of George the First,

* Personated by Mr. Horne.—Ed.

when it was fashionable for bloods and bucks to smoke long pipes, designated as a "yard of clay." With such a pipe Colonel Flint had duly provided himself for rehearsal; and to make his stage-business more perfect, soft-rolling clouds of smoke began to issue from the bowl, and float over the once famous coffee-room. Up came the manager, speaking quickly, "My dear Horne, on *no* account attempt to smoke! The Queen detests tobacco, and would leave the box immediately."

"But there's no tobacco in the pipe!" replied the Colonel.

"Oh—come—nonsense."

"Look here!"—and the Colonel took out of his waistcoat pocket a handful of dried herbs. "I got them in Covent Garden market this morning on the way to rehearsal."

"Well—we smelt tobacco the moment

we came within sight of the stage," said Dickens: "the pipe must be foul."

"It is quite a new pipe!"

Mark Lemon now came up, protesting that he also had smelt tobacco, and that the pipe must have been an old one re-burnt to look clean; so the offending clay was flung aside.

Before the next rehearsal, another pipe, warranted new and pure, was obtained, besides which it was placed in the fire, and kept there at white heat long enough to purify it ten times over, even had it been one of the unclean. Again the cloud began to unfold its volumes over "Will's Coffee-room;" and this time Sir Joseph Paxton came running from the seats in the front to the stage, declaring that smoking must really not be attempted, the Queen so detested the smell of tobacco. Once again the

Colonel protested the innocence of his pipe, in proof of which he produced a handful of dried thyme and rose-leaves from his waistcoat pocket. In vain. Sir Joseph insisted that he had smelt tobacco!—"They all smelt it!" So this second yard of clay was sent to shivers.

But the Colonel had chanced to see Siborne's "Model of the Battle of Waterloo," in which the various miniature platoons of infantry, as well as the brigades of artillery, were supposed to be firing volleys, the clouds and wreaths of smoke being capital imitations composed of extremely fine and thinly drawn out webs of cotton, supported on rings and long twirls of almost invisible wire, and attached at one end to the mouths and muzzles of the miniature cannon and musketry. This model for a triumph in the art of smoking a pipe in the presence of a Queen who

abhorred tobacco, was now adopted by Colonel Flint, but held in reserve for the morning rehearsal of the full-dress rehearsal of the same night, when there would be a preliminary audience.

He ventured to flatter himself that all these delicate considerations would be much applauded both by the accomplished author and the management. Far from it. No sooner was the cloud of apparent smoke perceived to issue from the pipe, than the manager, stage-manager, and Sir Joseph Paxton hurried together to the assiduous guardsman, begging him on *no* account to persist in this smoking!—this smoke—or this (on examining the smoke) appearance of smoking. It would be most injudicious. Her Majesty would *think* she smelt tobacco, and this would be as bad as if Her Majesty really smelt it; at the same

time, they added, collectively, that they themselves *had* smelt tobacco, no matter from what source, or what cause! Of course there was an end of the matter; and the discomfited "fire-eater" of the comedy did the best he could to bully the company in "Will's Coffee-room" with his empty-bowled and immaculate yard of clay. These minute details serve to show the pains that were taken even with the slightest parts of this performance; pains worthy of the *Comédie Française.*

At the full-dress rehearsal, the audience was composed exclusively of the relatives, friends, and acquaintance of the Duke of Devonshire, and of the authors and artists engaged in the performance. All went well, and the "first night" was announced. The tickets were five guineas each, and Her Majesty sent a hundred guineas for her box. This night

went off most satisfactorily. Only one little accident occurred. Every gentleman of the period, of any rank, wore a sword; the manager, therefore, intimated that as our stage was small, and would be nearly filled up with side tables and tables in front, in the conspiracy scene in "Will's Coffee House," it would be prudent and important that the swords of the *dramatis personæ* should be most carefully considered in passing down the centre, and round one of the tables in front. At this table sat *the Duke of Middlesex* (Frank Stone) and *the Earl of Loftus* (Dudley Costello), in a private and high-treasonous conversation. On the table were decanters, glasses, plates of fruit, etc. At the other table, in front, sat *Mr. David Fallen* (Augustus Egg), the half-starved Grub Street author and political pamphleteer, with some bread

and cheese, and a little mug of ale. The eventful moment came, when *Mr. Shadowly Softhead* (Douglas Jerrold), *Colonel Flint*, and others, had to pass down the narrow space in the middle of the stage, to be presented to the Duke of Middlesex, and then, as there was not room enough to enable them to turn about and retire up the stage, each one was to pass round the corner of the table, and make his exit at the left first entrance. This was done by all with safety, and reasonably good grace, except by one gentleman, who shall not be named; as he rose from his courtly bowing to advance and pass round, the tip of his jutting-out sword went rigidly across the surface of the table, and swept off the whole of the "properties" and realities! Decanters, glasses, grapes, a pine-apple, a painted pound cake, and

several fine wooden peaches, rolled pell-mell upon the stage, and, as usual, made for the footlights. A considerable "sensation" passed over the audience; amidst which the Queen (to judge by the shaking of the handkerchief in front of the royal face) by no means remained unmoved. But Dickens, who, as *Lord Wilmot*, happened to be close in front, with admirable promptitude and tact, called out with a jaunty air of command, "Here, drawer! come and clear away this wreck!" as though the disaster had been a part of the business of the scene, while the others *on* the stage so well managed their bye-play that many of the audience were in some doubt about the accident. When inquiry was instituted as to the culprit on this occasion, as every one of the "Guild" protested his innocence of the awkward fact, it was

presently discovered that the guilty individual was a supernumerary lord for that scene, enacted by a gentleman who was one of the Duke's suite.

Two other amusing incidents occurred. A number of bedrooms had been placed at our disposal for dressing-rooms. A certain gentleman of the "company" (the portly and genial Mark Lemon it was whispered) had been somewhat too long over the buttoning of a long-flapped and stiffly embroidered waistcoat, and the call-boy had been sent upstairs a second time from the prompter below, to inform him that the stage would immediately be "waiting" for him. Away ran the boy and vanished round a corner. In his haste, the "character" in question took a wrong turn, and hurried down a steep flight of stairs, and then down another flight, presently finding that he was close

upon the kitchens. Up he rushed again, and scuttled along the gallery, till he turned into a still longer gallery, well lighted, but vacant and hopeless. Once more he made a turn, now wild with the thought of the stage being kept waiting, and seeing a tall, dark figure passing the further end, he rushed towards it—wigged, powdered, buckled, ruffled, perspiring, maddened, and gasping out, "Where—where's the stage?" He was barely able to recognise the Duke who with a delightful urbanity at once put him upon his right course.

Another miscalculation of time occurred, in consequence of Sir Joseph Paxton remarking in the green-room, just after the conclusion of the performance, that he had arranged the Queen's chair in the supper-room in a peculiar manner, with exotic and other rare flowers, which had arrived

that evening fresh from the Duke's gardens at Chiswick and Chatsworth. Colonel Flint hearing this, requested permission to see the floral throne, before Her Majesty's entrance to the supper-room. "By all means," said Sir Joseph, "but you must be very quick." Away hurried the applicant, and was speedily in the supper-room, and made his way, his stage costume notwithstanding, through a number of gentlemen in waiting, officers attired in a very different sort of uniform, footmen, etc., to their no small surprise and amusement. But the sight well rewarded the effort.

At the top of the table and furthest from the door, there was a richly-carved and cushioned chair, raised a few inches above the other chairs. It had large padded arms of figured satin and velvet, and a high back with a carved gothic

arch at the top. Very little of the chair could be clearly seen, and its outline was only indicated here and there. The whole of the back was devoted to roses red and white, chiefly for their odour, mingled with magnolias, jasmine, honeysuckle, and tuberoses; but the high arch and sides of the chair were overhung with festoons and long dripping falls and tangles of the most lovely orchidaceous and other exotic plants, and by fine trickling tendrils and dangling lines, bearing little starry-flowers, and very minute and curiously-striped leaves, leaflets, and tiny fairy buds; some of the creepers displaying little flowers and leaves that resembled a sort of floral jewellery. At the top of the arched chair back, there was a large night-flowering ceres, of most delicious and recondite perfume. (No wonder Sir Joseph was

alarmed at tobacco!) The predominating colours were snow-white and apple-green, with a little soft azure, and a few scarlet buds, and here and there a dark Tuscany rose or two for *shadows;* the whole having been carefully selected and arranged by Sir Joseph as a suitable background for the dress worn by Her Majesty on this, we may say unprecedented occasion. An imitation of dew-drops was achieved to a degree of perfect illusion, by means of opals and glass as it seemed; a piece of refined ingenuity which was about to undergo a close inspection by Flint, when suddenly it was announced that the Queen was approaching the supper-room! Instantly the awakened Colonel made a dash for the open door, but only to encounter the bowing backs and elegant embroidered coat-tails of gentlemen and lords in wait-

ing, who were ushering in Her Majesty! There was nothing for it but to spring aside, and range in line with the officers and gentlemen in attendance, and to "stand attention" as if on grand parade. He trusted, in the confusion of the moment, that his guardsman's uniform of the time of George I., notwithstanding the polished thigh boots and towering powdered wig, would not be observed by the Queen, with Prince Albert, the Duke, and suite attending, or following. Vain hope! The gleaming glances that passed told all; and with long rapid strides, the instant Her Majesty was seated, the anachronismic uniform made its exit at the rear of the line in which it had so unseasonably appeared *en militaire.*

In "Will's Coffee-room," there was a fire-place at the remote end, where the

semblance of a fire was burning brightly. This was effected by the painted transparency of a fire, with a large lamp close to it behind the scene. As Colonel Flint was standing before the fire-place smoking his "yard of clay," a certain gentleman, who was rather late in his dressing, and who ought to have been ready to enter on the other side, rushed by so flurriedly that he thrust the lamp aslant against the scene. The glass was broken, and the flame caught the scene, which at once took fire. Smoke and tumult were just commencing, when Mark Lemon and Dickens simultaneously rushed upon the stage, caught up a thick overcoat, which was flung upon the rising flames, then both jumped upon it, and, without being aware of their excited performance, literally danced up and down together upon the

smothered flames and the smashed lamp. Certainly nobody laughed. It was anything but a laughing moment, remembering where it occurred and who was present. Of course it was prudently hushed up.

After the performance, and before leaving the box, Her Majesty had sent to the manager to express her gratification, coupled with the remark, "They act very well indeed." This was duly announced to the company, when assembled for supper, and was received with great satisfaction, but Dickens went on, drily adding,—"But the Queen is very kind—and was sure to say *that;*"—which very much straightened the complaisant faces round the table till they laughed at each other. Nevertheless, a few more words may be said on the subject. They really *did* act well; some very well. When it is remembered the studious sort of men they

all were, and the time, together with the great pains, bestowed in all respects,—why not? The principal character, as matter of elocution, was that of *Hardman*, and the gentleman personating this rising young statesman was unquestionably one of the best private readers of the day. Then, as to acting, most of the company were practised amateurs long before this event, more especially Douglas Jerrold and Mark Lemon, who, in parts that suited them, were first-rate actors, almost equal to Dickens. The two latter were matchless in the after-piece, but the parts they played in the comedy were not in accordance with their peculiar talents. It has been said that Mr. Dickens, in private life, had very much the appearance of a seafaring man. This is quite true; and his long daily walks about London and the environs, or at the sea-side, caused

him to have a very sun-burnt weather-beaten face. His full-length portrait might readily be mistaken for the captain of an East Indiaman, if truthfully painted. But the character and costume of "Lord Wilmot, a young man *at the head of the Mode*, more than a century ago," did not suit him. His bearing on the stage, and the tone of his voice, were too rigid, hard, and quarter-deck-like, for such "rank and fashion," and his make-up, with the three-cornered gold-laced cocked-hat, black curled wig, huge sleeve-cuffs, long flapped waistcoat, knee-breeches and great shoe-buckles, were not carried off with the proper air; so that he would have made a good portrait of a captain of a Dutch privateer,* after having taken a capital prize.

* A celebrated painter is said to have made a similar remark. What would he have thought of Mr. Dickens in the above costume?

When he shouted in praise of the wine of Burgundy, it far rather suggested fine kegs of Schiedam. It was in "Mr. Nightingale's Diary," which followed, that he was inimitable. The late Miss Mitford, being present at the performance of this some time afterwards, pronounced certain parts of his acting in this piece wonderful. Neither can it be said that Mark Lemon was quite at home in his part in the comedy,—viz., that of "Sir Geoffrey Thornside, a gentleman of good family and estate." He looked far more like a burly wealthy Yorkshire brewer, who had retired upon something handsome. In the afterpiece he could hardly have been surpassed. Yet both the last-named parts in the comedy were fairly acted. Jerrold also (a capital actor in certain parts) was hardly in his right element. His head and face were a good illustration of the

saying that most people are like one or another of our "dumb fellow creatures," for he certainly had a remarkable resemblance to a lion, chiefly for his very large, clear, round, undaunted, straightforward-looking eyes; the structure of the forehead; and his rough, unkempt, uplifted flourish of tawny hair. It was difficult to make such a face look like the foolish, half-scared, country gentleman, Mr. Shadowly Softhead; but he enacted the part very well, notwithstanding. As a contrast to these, Mr. Frank Stone, the painter, presented a very grave, tall, stately full-length of the proud Duke of Middlesex, whose dignity was astonished at his wife daring to take "such a liberty" as to give him a kiss; while the Earl Loftus of Dudley Costello was far too elegant for a nobleman of the court of George I., and rather resem-

bled a highly-polished French marquis of the age of Louis Quatorze. The make-up of Egg as David Fallen, the Grub Street author, etc., was such as only a fine painter could well have effected. Intellectual and refined amidst his seedy clothing; resentful of his hard lot, yet saddened by disappointment and semi-starvation, his thoughts appearing to oscillate between independence of character, his political hiring, and his hungry family in their miserable attic; such a countenance was presented as the stage had seldom seen, and is very unlikely to see again, except at rare and exceptional intervals. The Irish landlord of Mr. Fallen (*Paddy O'Sullivan*) was represented to perfection by Robert Bell, whose gigantic stature, long frieze coat, little bit of a hat, ragged-red wig, and highly-painted smiling visage (reminding

one of the *Sompnour* in the "Canterbury Tales") gave a picture that even surpassed the effect of the rich brogue in which he blurted out the few words allotted to him. The minor parts, however, of this play have all been reduced to mere shreds in the acting copies since published. No professional actors would be at all likely to take such pains with them as were exhibited on this occasion.

II.—Mr. Nightingale's Diary.

THIS very amusing production was written for the afterpiece to Lord Lytton's comedy of "Not so Bad as we Seem; or, Many Sides to a Character," and was enacted for the first time at Devonshire House, on the night which inaugurated the series of amateur per-

formances. It was never published, and a few copies only were printed and circulated among the members of the "Guild." But, like the possessors, they have all drifted away on the surges of time, and whoever would revert to the piece has very little chance of getting any copy, or fragment of a copy, to assist his memory.

The plot was so slight as scarcely to merit the name, but the principal characters were of a kind never to be forgotten. These were eleven in number; Mark Lemon personated three, Dickens five, and Augustus Egg, R.A., one—and a very remarkable one it was. The remaining characters are of little moment, and, in truth, we forget who played *Mr. Nightingale*. Her Majesty and *suite*, having retired for some refreshment after the performance of the comedy, had re-

turned to their places. The Duke was "all smiles" at our success thus far. It was delightful to see any man so happy. And with regard to the audience, nearly all of whom were members of the highest circles as to rank, and also (at any rate in the eyes of Douglas Jerrold, who repeatedly declared it aloud behind the scenes), as to female beauty, most truly might it be said, that they all came *pour assister* on our all important first night, and constituted, therefore, the best audience that could be desired.

The piece opened with the entrance of Mark Lemon, dressed as a German student, travelling after the manner of Wilhelm Meister on his "art-apprenticeship." The scene, however, was the private parlour of an English country inn; and it was at once discovered that the apparent student was a strolling player

who had adopted that disguise in order to practise the not very uncommon, yet by no means easy, art of "living by his wits." Mark's portly figure was covered with a nankeen summer blouse, having a broad leather belt round the waist, or the place where a waist should be; and on his head he wore a German cap with a great peak, which did but little to shade his large, round, sunbrowned, smiling face. On his first entrance he gave the effect of an overgrown schoolboy; but when he came close down to the lamps it was evident that he was a fully developed rogue. He wore travelling boots; a German *quersack*, or leather wallet, dangled from his belt, and he carried an unmistakable English carpet-bag, which he rapidly, and rather furtively, deposited under a table on one side of the room.

He now made a brief soliloquy, with a

richly humorous expression of countenance, to the following effect:—"He was not at present a member of a company of strolling players, but he kept better company—to wit, his own—and he was now strolling, not to please others by playing for them, but to play *upon* them to please himself; and the more they paid the better *he* was pleased; *them* was his sentiments. But, at the present moment, unfortunately, he was quite out of cash, and, as was sure to happen when he was penniless, he felt more than usually hungry. For this reason he had naturally entered an inn, as the proper place for satisfying hunger; and when that sacred duty had been performed, he would consider by what means the bill was to be paid. Could any man do more?"

So saying, he seated himself at a side-table, and after running over an imaginary

larder, he resolved on ordering a good dinner, and forthwith rang the bell. As no waiter made an appearance, he rang again vigorously; and yet a third time he had to ring. The individual who then entered was greeted with a round of smiles, as well as general applause. Of course all recognised *Sam Weller*, and Dickens as the impersonator.

"Are you the waiter, or the groom, or what—of this inn?" demanded the German student, affecting rather a high air.

"Well, sir," said Sam, "I'm a half-waiter, and a sort of a half-boot."

"Ah—indeed. This seems rather a humble kind of an inn, my man. Is there any corn in Egypt?"

"Don't know, sir, but we've got some *here*—quite enough for any 'orse you may 'ire for the day."

"Ahem! You misunderstand me, young man; *I* am the horse inquiring for corn. What's the state of the larder, eh?"

"Well, sir, there's the not werry shapely remains of a round o' boiled beef, as was ot the day afore yesterday; and there's the back and drumsticks of a seasonable old goose; and—and—why, Jemmy,—Jemmy Daddleham, is that you? I *thought* I know'd you!"

It turns out that Sam Weller, at one time a member of a company of strolling players, recognises in the German student *Mr. James Daddleham*, the leading tragedian of that company. Sam quickly disappears, in order to bring some refreshment for the famishing "star," who falls into a train of sentimental absurdity during his absence.

Some of the characters in this laughable piece had no names given to them,

and others had names liable to be changed with every representation; and as for the dialogue, it was never twice alike, the two principals understanding each other well enough to extemporise wherever they had a fancy to do so. Consequently, the printed copies (whenever a straggler may be discovered) will contain very little of what was said by these two humourists and amateurs.

Sam Weller speedily returns, bringing with him a tray. He spreads the cloth on the little side-table, and "in no time" it is seen covered with beef and bread, bottles and plates, and a couple of tankards. This done, Sam seats himself at the table, opposite the eminent tragedian, who falls to with every demonstration of hunger and delight. Eating heartily, and drinking to match, always gives great pleasure to a British audi-

ence; and this most refined of audiences proved no exception. While the "star" was recruiting, Sam contented himself by responding to friendly pledges with the tankard, and by various amusing references to their strolling days, and to the characters impersonated by the "world-renowned" Mr. Daddleham, especially some of his tragic parts, concerning which Sam alternately flattered him with preposterous compliments, and startled him by equivocal commentaries. For instance:—

"O, sir," said Sam, "what a 'Amlet yourn was! Shall we ever again see sich a 'Amlet?"

"You think it was good, do you, Sam?"

"Good, sir! good's no word for it."

"Ah!" said Mr. Daddleham, with affected modesty, laying down his knife

and fork, and looking sentimentally at his portly corporation; "yes, Sam; I think there *was* something *in* my Hamlet."

"Yes, and something *of* you, too, sir."

This ridiculous compliment to his unsuitable figure of course upset the previous eulogy. The conversation then dropped into melodrama, and Sam referred to a certain piece in which they had fought a dreadful combat together in a wood. This enlivening recollection induced a mutual draught from the foaming tankard; and Sam, exclaiming, "Ah, those wos the days, sir—them wos!" regretted they could not fight that celebrated combat again. Hereupon Mr. Daddleham informed Sam that it could very easily be fought again.

"When, sir?" said Sam, eagerly.

"Now, Sam!"

"Where the place, sir?"

"Not 'upon the heath,' but on these very boards."

"These!"

"Yes, these, Sam. Behold yonder carpet bag, there!"

"Ha! under the table! I see it all. That bag contains——"

"It does—it does! all the theatrical properties now left me by invidious fate."

The eminent *incog.* now rushed across to his carpet bag, and from it hurriedly extracted two melodramatic short swords. Sam eagerly seized one of these weapons, and a sanguinary combat of the unique old school of popular melodrama at once commenced, in process of which every outrageous and ridiculous *stage business* of that class was carried to the utmost perfection. First, they prowled round and round each other—now darting in,

very nearly, and as suddenly starting back; next a passing cut is exchanged, then two or three cuts, the swords emitting sparks, and the combatants uttering strange guttural sounds, breathing hard, and showing their teeth at each other like hungry wolves. At last they close, and strike and parry to a regular measured time, till gradually you find they are beating a sort of time very like the one known as "Lodoiska" in the "Lancer Quadrilles." After this they strike at the calves of each other's legs by alternate back stroke and parry, and then Sam springs upon Mr. Daddleham's left hip, and deals a succession of blows downwards at his head, all parried, of course, with ludicrous precision. Finally, the sword of Sam is passed under one of his antagonist's arms, who thereupon exhibits the agonies of being run through the

body, but nevertheless comes again and again to receive the same mortal wound; in fact, he comes, though fainter and fainter each time, till Sam is at length so exhausted with running through such a fat body that he reels backward fainting just as his antagonist falls upon the stage with a last gasp and a bump that convulses the whole audience with laughter.

After this they return panting to the table, and recruit themselves with another tankard of ale, over which some conversation takes place, introductory of the plot of the piece, and the two quondam strollers separate. I have said that several of the characters were not named in the bills, so that we are at liberty to give them any passing name by way of identification. Even the name of Sam Weller was not given, so far as I remember; but nobody could doubt who it was from the

first moment of his entrance. One of the characters represented by Dickens was named *Mr. Gabblewig*, a capital name for an over-voluble barrister, but certainly of far less mark and importance in the piece than other characters to whom no names were given.

Another character played by Dickens was a hypochondriac, for whom a certain renowned Doctor (a quack, of course) had prescribed repeated doses, day and night, of mustard and milk. The sick gentleman, seated in a great high-backed padded arm-chair, went through a rambling discourse, continually interrupted by spasmodic contortions, which he accompanied with declarations such as, "That's the mustard! I know by the hot, biting pang! Ha! that's the milk! I'm sure that must be the milk by the griping! The sour curds are now in full.

Oh;—there's the mustard again!—come to—come to—come to correct the milk, as the Doctor said it would.'

At this painful crisis Mark Lemon enters as the great Doctor. His make-up is altogether admirable—black evening dress, with knee-smalls, black silk stockings, gilt knee-buckles, and gilt shoe-buckles; black silk vest, with a very large white shirt-frill, and a mock-diamond pin. His fingers display several mourning-rings. A high, old-fashioned white neckcloth, without shirt collar, and powdered hair, complete his costume. He advances with a slow, soft pace, a gentle, yet somewhat pompous air, and gesticulates with his hands, occasionally patting the patient's shoulder, very much in the style of the Doctor in Punch's show, full of ridiculous patronage and conceited paternal dogmatism. The dis-

course he delivers is in the following strain:—

"Yes, yes—ah, yes, my friend—calm yourself, my *dear* sir—be quite calm. What you are suffering from at this moment is simply the pervestigation of the lacteal mustardine panacea, acting diagonally and hydrodynamically upon the vesicular and nervine systems, and thence sympathetically upon the periosteum. But be calm—be quite calm. We shall very soon—yes—let me feel your pulse! Ah, yes, very fair—three, four, five, six—my watch—my—bless my soul! I've left it at my nephew's [*Aside:* My uncle's]; but we can count as well without it. There—that will do—keep yourself—keep yourself calm, my *dear* sir!" (Here the patient exhibits a variety of contortions.) "We shall change the medicine. We shall just order you a

mild preparation of the agglomerated balsamic phenomenon, with a few grains of the carthusian pigment, and a tablespoonful every half-hour of the astrobolic decoction of tetramuncus."

Here the patient starts up in horror at the prospect, and, forgetting all his ailments, rushes madly about the stage, driving the Doctor and everybody else before him in his exit.

The character that produced the greatest effect was that of a woman who had no name awarded to her in the piece, but to whom Dickens always alluded as Mrs. Gamp,—not the real Mrs. Gamp, but only a near relation. Dickens's make-up in this character was not to be surpassed, unless indeed by one other which he personated, and by that of a wretched half-starved charity-boy represented by Mr. Egg. The woman was

accusing Mr. Nightingale of paternity in this matter, and she calls the boy to come forward and show himself as the living proof of her declaration. Thus summoned, a pale, miserable face, with hair cropped close, like a convict, and wearing a little round workhouse cap, peeped forth at one wing. By stealthy degrees the object advanced in a side-long way, half retreating at times, and finally getting behind Mr. Nightingale's chair, and only showing himself now and then when lugged forth by his mother. Mr. Egg was naturally short and attenuated, but how he contrived to make such a skeleton-like appearance was a marvel to all who looked upon him. Over his own face he had literally painted another face, and one so woful and squalid was surely never seen before upon the stage. The acting was equally perfect, for not

only did he enter like "a thing forbid," but all his movements kept up this appearance of abject self-consciousness and furtive evasion of all eyes. He crouched down behind or at the side of Mr. Nightingale's chair, like a starved hound, too terrified even to eat if food were offered to him, and finally he skulked and bolted off the stage at long strides, looking back as though he expected to be shot at like some intruding reptile. Altogether the thing was too real; it was more painful than pleasurable, and so far passed the true bounds of art. But the speech of the woman, as delivered by Dickens, amply made up for the pain caused by her wretched-looking boy. This speech, often repeated afterwards, was never heard to the end, from the incessant laughter it caused, not only among the audience, but among all the "Guild"

behind the scenes. When not in front to hear it, we used to congregate at the wings of the stage. It was uttered with unbroken volubility, very nearly in the following words:—

"Don't speak to me, sir! now, don't go to argify with me! don't pertend to consolate or reason with a unperteckted woman, which her naytural feelings is too much for her to support! Leave your 'ouse! No, sir, I will *not* leave the 'ouse without seeing my child, my boy, righted in all his rights!—that dear boy, sir, as you just saw, which he was his mother's hope and his father's pride, and no one as I knows on's joy. And the name as was guv to this blessedest of infants, and vorked in best Vitechapel mixed, upon a pin-cushion, were Abjalom, after his own parential father, Mr. Nightingale, and likewise Mr. Skylark who no

otherwise than by being guv to drinking, lost an 'ole day's work at the veel-wright 'business, vich it wos but limited, being veels of donkey-chaises and goats; and vun on 'em wos even drawn by geese for a wager, and came up the ile of the parish church one Sunday during arter-noon sarvice, by reason of the perwersity of the hanimals, as could be testified by Mr. Vix the beadle, afore he died of drawing on new Vellington boots after a 'arty meal of boiled beef and pickle cabbage to which he was not accustomed. Yes, Mr. Robin Redbreast, I means Nightingale, in the marble founting of that werry church wos he baptised Abjalom, vich never *can* be undone I am proud to declare, not to please nor give offence to no one, nohows and noveres, sir. No sir, no sir, I says, for affliction sore long time Maria Night-

ingale bore; physicianers was in vain, and one, sir, in particklar vich she tore the 'air by 'andfuls out of his edd by reason of disagreement with his perscriptions on the character of her complaint; and dead she is, and will be, as the 'osts of the Egyptian fairies, as I shall prove to you all by the hevydence of my brother the sexton, who I shall here perduce to your confusion in the twinkling of a star or humin hye!"

A critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, dealing synthetically with the works of Dickens, alludes to his habit of inventing or selecting peculiar characters and whimsical individualities, thus living in the midst of a world of oddities, very much of his own creation, and not appearing to be at all aware that no such classes were extant. Very observant people who have also penetrated among the more

hidden abodes, so to speak, of the lower strata of the population, have from time to time noticed specimens of most of these oddities; but they have been rare; nobody but Mr. Dickens would say they constituted classes. In one of the early numbers of "The Heads of the People," an article was written by Leigh Hunt, entitled "The Monthly Nurse." His description of this character, not omitting the great event in the house of "the baby," is not only perfectly truthful and natural, but extremely amusing. Like most of his writings, it is full of touches of kindliness and elegant humour. But for laughable qualities and broad fun it cannot be compared to Mrs. Gamp. We once heard a lady exclaim, "Oh, do read to us about the baby. Dickens is capital at a baby!"

One more impersonation by Dickens

remains to be described. It will have been noticed that the woman who discoursed so volubly and confusedly about her boy, making accusations which nobody on the stage, or off, can understand, announces the coming of her brother, the sexton, who is to prove something, to the confusion of everybody. And, in a remarkably brief time after his exit as the woman, Dickens again enters as her brother, the sexton. He appears to be at least ninety years of age, not merely by the common stage make-up of long white hair, large white eyebrows, blinking pink eyelids, and painted wrinkles and furrows, but by feebleness of limbs, a body pressed down by time, and suffering from accumulated infirmities. He is supported carefully by one arm, and now and then on each side, as he very slowly comes forward. The old sexton is hope-

lessly deaf, and his voice has a quailing, garrulous fatuity. He evidently likes to talk when an opportunity occurs, but it is quite obvious that he cannot hear himself speak any better than he can hear those who speak to him. When somebody bawls in his ear a certain question about burying, he replies in a soft, mild, quavering voice, "It's of no use whispering to me, young man." The effect of these few words was at once pathetic and ludicrous. This sexton is the character that Miss Mitford pronounced wonderfully truthful. After repeatedly shouting "buried," he suddenly fancies he has caught the meaning of the word, and the worn and withered countenance feebly lights up with the exclamation, "Brewed! oh, yes, sir, I have brewed many a good gallon of ale in my time. The last batch I brewed, sir, was

finer than all the rest—the best ale ever brewed in the county. It used to be called in our parts here, 'Samson with his hair on!'—in allusion—in allusion" —(here his excitement shook the tremulous frame into coughing and wheezing) —"in allusion to its great strength." He looked from face to face to see if his venerable jest was understood by those around; and then, softly repeating, with a glimmering smile, "in allusion to its great strength," he turned slowly about and made his exit, like one moving towards his own grave while he thinks he is following the funeral of another.

With this afterpiece closed the first night's performance of the "Guild" at Devonshire House. The Duke was so delighted with our success that he proposed both the comedy and the afterpiece should be repeated. On the second

night his Grace gave a magnificent ball and supper to the performers, and the whole audience. It was a very brilliant scene. Some of the younger ladies amused themselves with identifying the various characters who had appeared on the stage; and this was no easy matter as we had flattered ourselves that the make-up, by wigs, paint, and powder, of most of us was a complete transformation. One of the most amusing things in this ball-and-supper scene was the state of romantic admiration into which Jerrold was thrown by the beauty of some of those who might truly have been designated the flowers of the nobility. Jerrold moved hastily about, his large eyes gleaming as if in a walking vision; and when he suddenly came upon any of the "Guild" he uttered glowing and racy ejaculations, at which

some laughed, while others felt disposed to share his raptures.

After these two great inaugural nights, the same performances were given in the provinces, in Edinburgh, and at the Duke's mansion at Chatsworth, where the extraordinary improvements in the gardens, orchards, conservatories, and shrubberies, by Sir Joseph Paxton, much enhanced the pleasure of the visiting amateurs. The next performances, however, immediately after those at Devonshire House, were given at the Queen's Concert Rooms, Hanover Square, to overflowing audiences. We then visited Manchester, Liverpool, Bath, Bristol, etc., meeting with great success everywhere; so much so that Dickens announced one night after supper, and before the usual games began, that having already made £3,000, with-

out much trouble, he thought we should continue until £5,000 was realised. With that sum he considered the "Guild" would be fully justified in laying their prospectus before the public, saying, "We have done thus much ourselves towards the foundation; now what will you do to help us?"

The same pieces being played at each town, and no rehearsals required, there was plenty of leisure for private study besides visiting and amusement. It was, however, established as a rule among us, that on the days when a performance was to be given, we should all dine together at two o'clock, and not sit long at table afterwards. When the performance was over we had supper, to which each person invited any particular friend who was resident in that city; and in most cases the mayor and other civic

magnates. It was generally Dickens's custom, as he always liked to do things on a handsome scale, to single out the principal hotel in the place, and then take the whole hotel—at any rate the two largest rooms, and all the beds—for the worshipful company of the "Guild." Sometimes it happened that we had no visitors to these supper-parties, and the wind-up was then apt to merge into more unreserved hilarity. At certain times everybody was talking or laughing at the same moment. Sitting next to Dickens one night, and beginning to say "As for conversation"—he suddenly exclaimed, "Impossible! it's hopeless," and sank back in his chair.

I have alluded to some "games" that were occasionally played after supper; and the reader who imagines them to have been whist, billiards, cribbage, chess,

backgammon, or even a "round game," will by no means have hit upon the fact. And yet, in one sense, it no doubt was a round game—being leap-frog, which we played all round the supper-table. Much of the fun of this consisted in special difficulties, with their consequent disasters; for Dickens was fond of giving a "high back," which, though practicable enough for the more active, was not easily surmounted by others, especially after a substantial supper; while the immense breadth and bulk of Mark Lemon's back presented a sort of bulwark to the progress of the majority. Now, as everybody was bound to run at the "frog-back" given, and do his best, it often happened that a gentleman landed upon the top of Mark's back, and there remained; while with regard to the "high back" given by Dickens, it frequently occurred that the

leaping frog never attained the centre, but slipped off on one side; and I well remember a certain occasion when a very vigorous run at it failing to carry the individual over, the violent concussion sent the high-arched "frog" flying under the table, followed headlong by the unsuccessful leaper. Dickens rose with perfect enjoyment at the disaster, exclaiming that it was just what he expected! But the accidents attending Mark Lemon were far more numerous, for while his breadth and length of back were most arduous for any but the very long-legged ones, his bulk and weight, when it came to his turn to leap, were of a kind to bring down the backs of all but the very strongest frogs.

The female characters of the comedy were enacted by professional ladies, who took private apartments in the vicinity

of the concert room, or hall, engaged for the "Guild," or else came down by express train on the nights of performance. The "Guild" carried their own "theatre" with them, constructed in various parts and pieces, and made to be packed up, erected, and taken down again in a few hours—the whole being comprised in a small compass under the arrangement of Sir Joseph Paxton and a theatrical machinist. No breakages of any importance ever occurred, and no accidents.

A few words should be said upon the final results of these histrionic labours. That run of good fortune which attended its brilliant commencement did not keep pace with the hopes that had been turned towards the practical foundation of the original design. Whether the public did not adequately respond to the

appeal; whether the appeal was not properly made, or the leaders of the scheme found it impossible to devote any more time to the work, or whatever else was the cause, is not within my knowledge; neither do I know what was the total sum realised, or how it was employed, as I sailed for the South Seas before the series of performances was brought to a close. The local position and surroundings of the proposed College, and the structure itself, I do not consider to be very cheerfully described by the visitor who said that "he had seen three doleful cottages standing in a field,"—poor shadows and frail images of the fine idea of a College retreat for Literature and Art—sad, yet suitable emblem of the mortal remains of nearly all the original projectors.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

MORE than five and twenty years ago, a slender figure was seated by a fire in the drawing-room of Mr. George Smith, the publisher of a novel which had brought the authoress at one bound to the top of popular admiration. There had been a dinner-party, and all the literary men whom the lady had expressed a wish to meet had been requested to respect the publisher's desire, and the lady's desire, that she should remain "unknown" as to her public position. Nobody was to know that this was the authoress of "Jane Eyre." She was simply Miss Brontë, on a visit to the family of her host. The dinner-party

went off as gaily as could be expected where several people are afraid of each other without quite knowing why; and Miss Brontë sat very modestly and rather on her guard, but quietly taking the measure of *les monstres de talent*, who were talking and taking wine, and sometimes bantering each other. Once only she issued from her shell, with brightening looks, when somebody made a slightly disparaging remark concerning the Duke of Wellington, for whom Miss Brontë declared she had the highest admiration; and she appeared quite ready to do battle with one gentleman, who smilingly suggested that perhaps it was "because the Duke was an Irishman."

Now it should be premised, that I had sent a presentation copy of a certain poem, addressed in complimentary but very earnest terms, to the "Author of

Jane Eyre,"—the lady whose *nom de plume* was "Currer Bell," and whose real name we were not to know. To this she had replied in a note, which concluded with these words:—

"How far the applause of critics has rewarded the author of 'Orion' I do not know; but I think the pleasure he enjoyed in its composition must have been a bounteous meed in itself. You could not, I imagine, have written that poem without at times deriving deep happiness from your work.

"With sincere thanks for the pleasure it has afforded me,

"I remain, dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"C. BELL."

On joining the ladies in the drawing-room, our host requested me to take

a seat beside Miss Brontë. The moment I did so, she turned towards me with the most charming artlessness, exclaiming, "I was so much obliged to you, Mr. Horne, for sending me your——" She checked herself with an inward start, having thus at once exploded her Currer-Bell-secret, by identifying herself with the "Author of Jane Eyre." She looked embarrassed. "Ah, Miss Brontë," whispered the innocent cause of the not very serious misfortune, "you would never do for treasons and stratagems." She nodded acquiescently, but with a degree of vexation and self-reproach. Shortly after this, Mr. Smith, overhearing some conversation between us which showed that the secret was "out," took an early opportunity of calling me aside, when he extended both hands, with an *et tu Brute* look, and began to complain of my breach

of the general understanding. I of course explained what the lady had said, at the *naïveté* of which he was not a little astonished and amused.

A very gentle, brave, and noble-spirited woman was Charlotte Brontë. Fragile of form, and tremulous as an aspen leaf, she had an energy of mind and a heroism of character capable of real things in private life as admirable as any of the fine delineations in her works of fiction. Nothing she has ever done seems to me more truthful, more magnanimous, and more touching than the brief preface she wrote to a new edition of her sister's novel of "Wuthering Heights." Emily was dead; her novel had not been appreciated; not well spoken of by the critics; not well received by the public; and mainly in consequence of frequent violations, in no instance of the realities of the

characters she had so wonderfully portrayed in their time and place, but violations of the so-called "taste of the day," which does not permit country squires and others to swear in oaths with proper spelling, but only by a first and last letter and a hushing-up dash, to mark the prudent author's disapproval of a profane tongue. There were also some other startling excrescences, but only as the excess of force in the reality of the pictures, all very pardonable in the first work of a young author. "Wuthering Heights" is one of the most powerful novels ever written in the English language, or any other language. It did indeed deserve a better fate. Emily Brontë died without receiving any public recognition of her genius, and although the inward fangs of a fatal disease were doing their certain work, the world might

perhaps have had another creation from that so potent spirit; and in any case the feeling of some public acknowledgment that she had not lived, and felt, and thought, and laboured in vain, would have helped to smooth her death-pillow, and to have made the brief remaining period of her generous sister's own life more happy. With what earnest emotion does Charlotte Brontë strive in that preface to place her sister's fame beside, or above, her own; with what noble yet almost tearful energy she seems to keep down her reproaches of the shallow judgment, the prudery, and want of perception, which had refused to admit Emily to her rightful place among writers of fiction! The ancient Romans used to set up a statue to "Success," and worshipped it as a god. What could the figure have been like, one wonders?

Such a deity could not well be set up, admissibly and substantially as such, in modern times; but, O Discretion! how often do we notice that for want of thee the best things may fail utterly, while, with thine aid, mediocrity in all shapes may become most prosperous.

CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH many genial and admirable characteristics of the private life of my old friend Charles Dickens the public are now familiar. Let me add one brief anecdote.

When *Household Words* first started, and for a long time afterwards, I had a room appropriated to me, in conjunction with the late Mr. Hogarth, in the house where *Household Words* and some chronicle or record connected with that periodical* were published. There we read newspapers, wrote private notes,

* [*The Household Narrative of Current Events*, issued monthly as a supplement to *Household Words*. See Vol. I., p. 49, of the latter periodical.—S. R. T. M.]

gossiped about Corelli and Sebastian Bach, and *de omnibus rebus*, and should have done special work, but somehow, excepting the correction of proofs, this generally happened to be done elsewhere. At that early date of the periodical, the only regular staff-contributors of original articles were Mr. Dickens, the acting editor, and myself; and, now and then, an article was jointly written. One day Mr. Dickens proposed to me a paper on "Chatham Dockyard." Being much taken with the subject, a day was fixed upon, and we went down early to have the day before us—dinner being ordered for the hour by which it was considered that our observations and notes could be completed. "Now," said Mr. Dickens, "this article will naturally divide itself into two parts, which we can afterwards dovetail together, viz., the

works of the dockyard, and the fortifications and country scenery round about. Which will you take?" I at once replied that the works of the dockyard seemed to me the most promising. He smiled, and said, "Then we'll meet here again at a quarter to five. I'm glad you make that choice, for this is a sort of native place of mine. I was a school-boy here, and have juvenile memories and associations all round the country outskirts." The kindness and good nature, even more than the readiness for any kind of work, need no comment. How few literary men would have suppressed a strong personal feeling on such an occasion, before the choice was made! But while the long life of continuous literary work will show so very few objectionable things, there will remain a large store of kindly acts to be recorded. To the joint article in question,

Mr. Dickens gave the title of "One Man in a Dockyard,"*—thus again sinking his own personality in the matter.

* [See *Household Words*, Vol. III., p. 553. The early volumes of *Household Words* contain a large number of articles by Mr. Horne, many of which were at the time attributed to Dickens. Among them may be mentioned "Ballooning," "A Penitent Confession" (a dream about the Koh-i-noor), "Gunpowder," and "The Fire Annihilator."—S. R. T. M.]

W. M. THACKERAY.

THE first time I met Thackeray (it will be seen that there are some reasons for definitely marking the individuals in this case) was at the office of the *Court Journal*, then edited by my admired and lamented friend Laman Blanchard. Thackeray was seated at the editor's desk. "Oh! thank you!" exclaimed Blanchard, who was always glad to have to write as little himself as possible: "what are you writing there?" "I don't call it writing," said Thackeray, without looking up, "so much as squirting a little warm water down a page of your journal." This compliment to his courtly readers delighted Blanchard more

than it would have done most editors of a fashionable journal. An amusingly characteristic anecdote claims a few words at this moment. Blanchard told me that he once asked Colburn if he liked his last article in the *New Monthly*. "Like it! well, of course, I should have liked it." Not quite understanding this equivocal compliment, Blanchard again made the inquiry. "You see," said Colburn, with a grave business-look, "when a new contributor sends us anything, I examine every page and part of it—to find if it's *weight*, you know; and I do this less and less, till I can trust him; and then I never read him again. Now, in your case, I assure you I never read a word you write, and never intend to do so."

Some time after this a certain biographical and critical work was pub-

lished, in which several eminent writers were engaged, the editor agreeing to "stand fire" for the anonymous brigade.* This work was reviewed at some length in the *Morning Chronicle* by Mr. Thackeray, then only known to the public under the incongruous pseudonym of Michael Angelo Titmarsh. In his critique, obviously written in a half-cynical, half-rollicking, Royster-Doyster mood, he indulged in a variety of self-contradictory observations, and not a few intended personalities, though really wide of the mark, as they happened to be in no one respect applicable. He selected several sentences of profound or graphic criticism (little suspecting that they chanced to be written by most admired authors), and gibbeted them as unintelligible follies;

* "A New Spirit of the Age;" see Vol. I., p. 129 *et seq.*—ED.

made a broad sign-board caricature of the editor, as a denizen of the City who had got out of his depth; dressed him in an imaginary suit of the vulgarest taste, including a "waistcoat, splendid in the way of decoration," purchased in the vicinity of Bow Bells, etc.; and concluded, in the most astonishing manner, with the easy inconsistency of declaring that the editor, on the whole, was "never ungenerous or unmanly," that "his sympathies were honourable and well placed," and that "he told the truth as far as he knew it." In the second edition of the work, an introduction was written in which thanks were duly rendered to some reviewers, and unfair attacks answered. Now, a gentleman of six feet two, and bulky form, with a large cámus nose, and great round-glassed spectacles, should have been one of the last to venture upon

fanciful personalities. In reply, his inconsistencies were simply displayed; he was informed that the editor had known much more of the broiling sun of Mexico and the thunders of the Gulf of Florida than of London mud or the chimes of Bow Bells, and that if Mr. Titmarsh really were engaged to play the part of Adonis in the *Morning Chronicle*, it would be nothing but a pleasure to witness such a performance. But with regard to his final remark as to honourable sympathies and love of truth, if Mr. Titmarsh sincerely meant that, the editor would be happy to shake hands with him in public or private. A few weeks after this appeared, the editor happened to meet Thackeray at the Royal Society. He immediately came forward, and in the most courteous and kindly manner extended his hand, saying, "Mr. Horne,

will you allow me to take your hand?" This was the feeling and act of a true gentleman, and it is a great pleasure to record it. Of course we were friends from that day. But all such personalities have since been very properly banished from the superior organs of literature, and seem to be not readily tolerated in the humbler walks.

LEIGH HUNT.

WITH the delighful essayist and poetical critic, Leigh Hunt, my first acquaintance commenced when the late W. J. Fox, M.P. for Oldham, having become actively engaged in political life, wished to make over the proprietorship of his *Monthly Repository* to somebody of position, who would carry forward those principles of mental freedom, of reform, and of science, literature, and art, of which, with the assistance of Mr. John Stuart Mill, Miss Martineau, Dr. Southwood Smith, etc., it had for years been one of the very foremost champions. More especially Mr. Fox was anxious to disentangle it

entirely from the Unitarian connection, of which it had originally been the leading organ. With this view, the editorship had been undertaken by me, and the magazine had been carried on during six months, when it was found that the odour of unsanctified sectarianism was still supposed to cling to it, because it had once been the chief organ of that class of Dissenters. Sitting in œcumenical council, so far as our friend W. J. Fox and his four or five literary bishops could represent the world in question, it was determined to offer the magazine as a free gift to Leigh Hunt. It was eventually accepted jointly, at his wish, by Mr. Reynell, the printer of the *Examiner*, and himself, in the following little note, dated from Chelsea:—

"DEAR HORNE,—Though your letter seems intended for Mr. Reynell, yet, as the envelope is addressed to myself, I choose to pretend that I have a right to answer it, in order that I may express my thanks as quickly as possible for the frank and liberal manner in which you and your friends have met our wishes; and to say how happy we shall be, for our sakes as well as yours and theirs, to show all the sense that becomes us of your own.

"Your obliged and faithful Servant,

"LEIGH HUNT."

Under such auspices there surely was every reason to anticipate that the *Monthly Repository* would be, at last, cut clean away from all imaginary remains of sectarianism. Leigh Hunt started it with all his usual vivacity

and pleasure on commencing anything of a novel kind. He quite disported himself as in "fresh woods and pastures new." Excepting Mr. Fox, whose absence was deemed politic, most of the principal contributors on the staff of the previous editorship joined Leigh Hunt. Carlyle did something; Landor, Robert Bell, Thomas Wade, Egerton Webbe, and, if I recollect rightly, Mrs. Jameson, Robert Browning, Miss Martineau, and others sent him contributions. It flourished for a season; but so absorbent and reticent is public opinion that this always valiant, intellectual, and energetic pioneer of most of the leading ideas and principles of progression in our present day, having once been—in the memory of "the oldest inhabitant"—the chief organ of a dissenting sect, that early fact still hovered

and vapoured round it with a smothering atmosphere, and finally poor Leigh Hunt discovered that it was "labour in vain," and so the brave little *Repository* died in his editorial arms: about as happy and honourable an end as it could have had.

It is remarkable that so many literary men and women, more perhaps than any other class, give no dates to their letters and notes, or only imperfect dates, such as the months, or the day of the week. Hundreds are in my possession to which the probable date can only be given from circumstances mentioned in them, because the postmarks on the envelopes are generally illegible. Here is one from Leigh Hunt, which, of course, refers to the production of his beautiful and stage-neglected play of the "Legend of Florence."

What a delightful state of excitement he is in!—

"Friday, October 18th.

"My dear Horne,—The deed is done! and the play accepted! I received your letter the evening before last, and should have written yesterday morning, but was whirled off in an unusual hurry to read my play at twelve o'clock, having had notice to that effect, on Monday last, from Mrs. Orger, who at the same time said so many things about the difficulty of evet herself being present at the reading, of its being contrary to 'etiquette,' etc., and of her doubting whether she should be able to muster up courage enough to ask permission, that I was beaten off my intention to speak about your own kind offer. I was sorry for this when too late, as I thought

I perceived I could have managed it easily enough. The reading I must say ('burning blushes' apart) was received with acclamation, and all sorts of the kindest expressions, by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews, Mrs. Orger, Mr. Robertson (treasurer, an old friend), Bartley, stage manager, and Planché (I believe, reader), and the performance is to follow Knowles's, in the thick of the season. So I hope we other dramatising men will be 'looking up.'—I will take my chance of finding you in a few days.

"Mrs. Hunt's very best remembrances. Love of both to Miss P——, 'Mary,' I mean; also to Margaret, if you see her before I do. Receive again the thanks of yours ever most truly,

"L. H."

Something very much to Leigh Hunt's honour is not, I think, generally known; perhaps very few ever heard of it. "Now, Hunt," said Madame Vestris, with a smiling but earnest look, "if you will change the movement and close of the last act, it will be far more popular and profitable."

"But how, madam?"

"Thus: Agolanti has been one of the very worst husbands, no doubt; but after his wife's supposed death, there would be good reason for him to reform; in fact, to become quite an altered man. If then, after he finds she is not dead, you let him present himself to her—in short, if you will give him back his wife, your play will run for a hundred nights." Leigh Hunt at once answered: "Impossible! So cruel, exacting, and utterly selfish a domestic tyrant as

Agolanti, could never become an altered man. In a very short time he would be as bad again as before, and drive her really into her grave. I can't give him back Ginevra. Besides, as he is killed in the end, the great probability is that she will be happy with one who truly loves her, and is worthy of her. The end, as it stands, suggests that." And so the play had only a moderate success of some thirty nights. Too bad—too good.

With the sudden discovery of so rare and rich a vein, and in a veteran author, it may naturally excite wonder at the present day how it happened that only one other production of Leigh Hunt's ever appeared on the stage. And the more may this be wondered at, when Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews had such high expectations of his next play that the treasurer was directed to pay him £100

in advance, by way of securing whatever piece he might write for the stage. Of his fruitless labours and vexations how little has he narrated. Things explicable in any other art and profession, seem often quite inexplicable with regard to the stage. A very similar result attended the production of the two fine plays * by Mr. Browning, then a very young dramatist. If not highly successful, they at least succeeded, and undoubtedly were of high promise. But we saw no more of

* ["Strafford," produced at Covent Garden May 1, 1837, Macready personating Pym, and Helen Faucit representing Lucy Percy, Countess of Carlisle; and "A Blot on the 'Scutcheon," produced at Drury Lane February 11, 1843, with Phelps as Thorold, and Helen Faucit as Mildred Tresham. Mr. Horne errs in supposing that Mr. Browning was seen "no more on the stage," for "The Duchess of Cleves" (entitled "Columbe's Birthday" in Mr. Browning's collected poems) was produced at the Haymarket in 1844, Miss Cushman enacting the heroine.—S. R. T. M.]

him on the stage. This is not the place for any discussion of the question; but one remark may be made, to the effect that the blame only lies with the public at second hand.* The success of Mr. Robertson's comedies, and more recently of Mr. Tom Taylor's historical play,* is strong evidence that if there really be a fixed depravity of taste in large classes of the public, there are other classes eager to hail a superior order of drama, and the absolute reform of the stage. This is steadily advancing.

Some of Leigh Hunt's notes on literary business are amusingly adroit in dealing with oversights, delays, or other difficulties. Here is one:—

"CHELSEA, Feb. 6th.

[No year; but postmark on envelope legibly giving 1838.]

"MY DEAR HORNE,— Many thanks

*. "Twixt Axe and Crown."—ED.

for Blanchard's kind notice, for which I will thank him also. I shall be very glad to see you when you can break away. A due and huge fire shall welcome you during this (indeed) terribly cold weather, which has half petrified my half-tropical faculties, and attacked me with rheumatism, liver complaint, and other gentilities; but I endeavour to make the most of the present sunshine, and am taking a holiday or two of verse-writing. Did you miss some verses you were good enough to send me, in the current number? *So did I*, much more; for I had determined on seeing them there, and am ashamed to say that I have mislaid them. I must have been so occupied with something else at the time as to dispose of them hastily in some unusual corner. I have no doubt they will be forthcoming at their now

good time; but may I ask if you can forestall them with *another copy*.

"Ever truly yours,

"LEIGH HUNT.

"P.S.—Of volume of *Repository* (for which very many thanks), when I see you. I have given divers articles no sort of *just* perusal yet."

Here is another, so courteous as to be really courtly. It might have been written in a full "suit" of the time of Lord Chesterfield, and the person addressed might almost feel that he ought to be in similar attire to read it with due bows, acknowledgments, and protestations. And all about a small matter of literary revision:—

"CHELSEA, August 2nd.

Probably about the same year as the last.]

"MY DEAR MR. OPIFEX,—Pray favour

me with an early *Tuesday* evening (not inconvenient to you, I think you said) in order that I may enter into a more detailed explanation of my reasons for venturing to omit a few lines towards the beginning of your beautiful tragedy. It was a great liberty, and I hope you do not fancy, for a moment, that I took it without great doubt and reluctance; but I finally warranted myself for three reasons: first, . . . and third, that in your interior you seemed to me to be so truly possessed of the good-nature properly belonging to genius, that I reckoned upon your forgiveness under the circumstances. The truth is I took it for the *only* passage in which the malice of a critic might find anything to turn to discordant account; and I hope I am not growing impertinent in my excuses when I add, that

for *your* sake it was I was chiefly moved to venture upon the officiousness. . . . . Come then soon, if you can, and tell me that you are not angry with

"LEIGH HUNT."

The following, for its joyous vein of romantic flattery, surpasses most ebullitions of the kind on record, when the inadequacy of the cause is considered. It is merely to excuse himself for neglecting or procrastinating the return of some printer's proofs, which there was no great need for me to receive in haste.

"CHELSEA, Feb. 18th.

[No year given, and no means of tracing it.]

"MY DEAR OPIFEX,—A word from you is worth a thousand others from almost all other men, let it have been ten

times later; and I trust this acknowledgment need as little apologise for delay, knowing how much you and I constantly think of one another, with an intercommunication of spirit that can well let the post wait a bit. Your letter is as great a gem to me as if the Jew of Malta himself had given me one out of his list; and I fancy I can appreciate it too, without its making the bestower a jot the less rich, but the reverse—more rich from his power to bestow, and to wait. God bless you. I will do all you wish with the proofs, and send them at the right time.

"Your affectionate Friend,

"LEIGH HUNT."

Leigh Hunt, as I have said, lies in Kensal Green Cemetery. The last remains of his friends Keats and Shelley lie

beneath the grass-grown pyramid of Caius Cestius, at Rome; and the last earthly remains of Elizabeth Barrett Browning lie sleeping—"perchance to dream"—beneath the grassy wall of the Porta a Pinti, at Florence. *Sic transit gloria—sic transit!*—all words are vain

"To weep a loss that turns our lights to shades."

THE END.

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